



UNEP/MED WG.570/5

Second Project Steering Committee Meeting of the Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Child Project 2.1

Rabat, 8 June 2023

-
Report of the Meeting



2.1
Mediterranean
Coastal Zones Climate
Resilience Water Security
and Habitat Protection"

Report of the Meeting

Introduction

1. The MedProgramme Coordinating Unit (MedPCU) held its Third Project Steering Committee Meeting (PSCM) of Child Project 2.1 (GEF ID 9687) “Mediterranean Coastal Zones: Water Security, Climate Resilience and Habitat Protection” on 8 June 2023 in Rabat, Morocco. This Child Project falls under the overall umbrella of the GEF UNEP Programme (GEF ID 9607), entitled “Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing Environmental Security”.
2. The primary objective of this Third PSCM was to review progress in the project delivery and discuss and approve the Project’s annual workplan and budget forecast for 2023 Q2-2024 Q1.
3. The presentations for all agenda items are provided in Annex IV to the present report.

Participation

4. The Meeting was attended by representatives from four of the nine participating countries: Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, and Tunisia. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as lead GEF Implementation Agency, the Mediterranean Action Plan/Barcelona Convention Secretariat (UNEP/MAP), as executing agency and PAP/RAC, Plan Bleu/RAC, GWP-Med and UNESCO, as executing partners, were also represented.
5. The full list of participants is attached as Annex I to the present report.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

6. The meeting was opened at 10:00 AM (CET) on 8 June 2023 by the MedProgramme Programme Officer, Ms. Olfat Hamdan. Ms. Hamdan underlined the linkages among the MedProgramme Child projects 2.1, 2.2 and SCCF and invited the Executing Partners and the participating countries to work together towards improved coordination and collaboration either in Child Project implementation or in abiding to the reporting requirements in a timely, efficient and collaborative manner. Ms. Hamdan reminded the Meeting that during the Mid-term Review the project will be evaluated against the progress towards the end-of-project targets indicated in the Project Document and called for increased collaboration of Executing partners among them and with the MedPCU in the preparation of the “Progress Implementation Report” (PIR), the quarterly progress and expenditure reports and the co-financing reports.
7. Mr. Karim Endily, Head of the UNESCO regional office for Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania highlighted how critical is the issue of water for the Maghreb region and how important is the contribution of education, of culture, of human and social sciences to develop the know-how on integrated water management in extreme contexts in close collaboration with science. Mr. Endily underlined how important is the access to reliable information in order to monitor pressures on freshwater resources and to support inter-institutional dialogue and collaboration for sustainable management of surface and ground water. Mr. Endily confirmed the support by the UNESCO IHP to the MedProgramme and its participating countries towards a water secure world in a changing environment.
8. Ms. Hamdan explained the objectives of this meeting, which are to approve the 2023 Q2/2024 Q1 work plan and budget for the implementation of this Child Project. She introduced the proposed Chair of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and Organization of Work

9. The meeting elected the following officer: Mr. Adel Yacoub, Head of Service, Ministry of the Environment of Lebanon. The Chair reviewed the agenda and invited the partners to formulate comments and suggestions on additional points to be addressed. The Provisional Agenda was adopted (please find as Annex II to the present report).

Agenda item 3: Progress since the 2nd SC Meeting

10. Ms. Daria Povh, PAP/RAC Senior Programme Officer presented the progress on the implementation of the Integrated Coastal Zone project activities assigned to PAP/RAC and underlined the importance of bringing forward activities aimed at reinforcing the national and regional regulatory and institutional framework for coastal zone management (ICZM Protocol ratification and implementation) in parallel with activities on the local level (plans and pilot initiatives). Ms. Povh highlighted the important progress made in the design of new IMAP candidate indicator 25 for land use changes which is a key tool to monitor pressures and threats to Mediterranean coastal zones. She mentioned the data management opportunities offered by the open data policy framework and made the example of the utilization of the candidate indicator to reflect climate change vulnerability when combined with digital elevation data. Ms. Povh reported on the work completed by the expert team including the selection of data providers and the elaboration of methodology for the calculation of the indicator which will be tested in three countries with final validation in Morocco and Lebanon. A training workshop for spatial planners was organized in Split in May 2023 to illustrate the methodology and present the simple and effective manual prepared to guide users through the implementation of the methodology and the calculation of the indicator to support the detection of land use change trends and the adoption of corrective policies. Ms. Povh also mentioned the progress in the comparative study on coastal legislation in 5 countries to identify good practices to be brought to the attention of the national committees for coastal zone management. Ms. Povh informed the Steering Committee on the progress in the redrafting of the 2015 national ICZM strategy for Lebanon in view of its possible discussion in the Parliament and adoption as well as in the elaboration of the two integrated coastal management plans for Boka Kotorska in Montenegro and for the Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region in Morocco and of the coastal vulnerability studies being prepared in two Wilayas of Algeria. She reported on the development of the marine spatial planning and the land cover change modules of the MedOpen online training course on coastal zone management, on the Coast Day 2023 celebration planned in Albania with focus on coastal aquifers and on the 2024 focus of the Coast Day which will be “women in coastal management”. In this respect she pointed out the challenges faced in gender disaggregated data gathering in some countries.
11. Mr. Michael Karner, Plan Bleu RAC Project Officer, illustrated the progress on the development of the core set of indicators of the planned conceptual framework for coastal observation, which is intended to provide a comprehensive framework for monitoring the status of the coastal zone with focus on the terrestrial part. This tool is expected to be released by the end of June 2023. Mr. Karner also underlined the important contribution of the Climagine participatory methodology to support the development of planning arrangements for the proper management of the coastal zone. Mr. Karner illustrated how the four Climagine workshops organized in each pilot area of Morocco and Montenegro allowed to engage coastal stakeholders to share their vision and identify the key challenges and priorities to address in order to ensure sustainable management of the coastal area and track progress through indicators. Mr. Karner mentioned how the resulting strategic recommendations are now being integrated in the respective coastal plans. Mr. Karner indicated how the Climagine methodology is expected to support the efforts by PAP/RAC and GWP-Med and inform the development of the integrated management plan for the Damour area. He mentioned that Plan Bleu is developing also a Climagine guide for ICZM practitioners focused on how

participatory approaches can inform and support science-policy-societies interfaces and anticipated that the planned training on nature-based coastal adaptation solutions planned under the SCCF project is scheduled for September in Albania back-to-back with the Coast Day celebrations.

12. Dimitris Faloutsos, GWP-Med Programme Manager, explained how GWP-Med activities are contributing to develop ICZM strategies and plans in Lebanon and Morocco. Mr. Faloutsos indicated that the NEXUS approach and the Source to Sea process can provide important information on the land-based causes of the pressures exerted on the coastal environment and this information is to be integrated in the development of ICZM strategies and plans. Mr. Faloutsos reported on the coordination efforts made by the Executing Partners in Morocco and Lebanon and on how the workshops and consultations organized in the two countries produced a result bigger than the sum of the individual results achieved by the Executing Partners. Mr. Faloutsos underlined the interlinkages among the Child Projects 2.1, 2.2 and SCCF and how those interlinkages contribute to the ICZM planning efforts. He mentioned the importance of the inter-ministerial coordination committees set up in Morocco and Lebanon to involve all relevant stakeholders in the exchanges and debates related to the implementation of CP 2.1, 2.2 and SCCF, to incorporate their respective contribution in the integrated management planning processes and to ensure coordination at the policy and technical levels. Mr. Faloutsos detailed the WEF NEXUS activities implemented in Morocco and how those activities are supporting the preparation of the ICZM plan through data collection and elaboration, NEXUS stakeholder analysis, NEXUS diagnostic study, elaboration, prioritization and cost benefit assessment of gender sensitive NEXUS solutions. He announced that the final NEXUS Study for Morocco will be released by the end of September 2023.
13. Mr. José Luis Martin-Bordés, UNESCO Project Manager, thanked the participating countries for the excellent coordination and collaboration established with the Executing Partners, in particular in Lebanon and Morocco, and reported on the activities implemented to date under Component 2 of CP 2.1. From the science-based characterization and assessment of the coastal aquifers to understand vulnerabilities and threats to translating them in policy measures and management plans to be mainstreamed into the ICZM plans under development in Morocco and Lebanon. Mr. Martin-Bordés briefly updated participants on the progress in the characterization of all five coastal aquifers, including on linkages with coastal lagoons and wetlands, on the mathematical models and GIS maps utilized to support the optimal management of the aquifers, on the constraints encountered in terms of data and information availability. He mentioned the common, multiple and interlinked challenges faced by the coastal aquifers along with possible sustainable management measures under evaluation by the six national teams. Mr. Martin-Bordés explained the activities concerning the assessment of groundwater discharges and marine-freshwater interaction (mostly nutrients and pesticides discharged in the sea) and how specific measurement and assessment techniques are being identified for each specific context to characterize those discharges through the support of an International Advisory Group. He also illustrated how, based on a thorough stakeholder analysis, the national policy dialogues on conjunctive surface and ground water management are being launched in the six participating country to develop more integrated and sustainable national water management plans. Mr. Martin-Bordés mentioned the excellent coordination and cooperation with the other Executing Partners, especially with GWP-Med for the conjunctive management policies and legal frameworks and for the activities in Lebanon and with Plan Bleu for the training on conjunctive management organized in May 2023. Mr. Martin-Bordés mentioned that although with some delays, the gender activities are now starting with the elaboration of an action plan and the collection of gender disaggregated data using methodologies developed by the UNESCO knowledge center based in Perugia, Italy. Mr. Martin-Bordés concluded mentioning that effective and efficient administrative and financial management flows among the Implementing Agency and the Executing Partners are necessary to ensure respect of work plans and coordination among the components, the partners and the activities of Child Project 2.1.

14. Following the request by Tunisia on additional detail on the simulation model utilized for each coastal aquifer, UNESCO mentioned that two models are being developed for each aquifer: one for the steady-state, and one for the transient regime, a third model which could better support decision-making should integrate other more political parameters which are different for each specific country.
15. Following the request by Lebanon to explain why an empirical model has not been considered sufficient, UNESCO explained that the first step is to use an empirical model with inputs, outputs and water budget, but this doesn't allow to develop scenarios and combining simulations with other pluviometric, agriculture, extraction models. Therefore, mathematical models are to be preferred. UNESCO suggested that when addressing complex changes the Lippitt-Knoster Model for Managing Complex Change is considered.
16. The MedPCU mentioned that in next biennium (2024-2025) countries will be developing their NAPs, which will be integrating action-oriented solutions.

Agenda Item 4: The national perspective

17. The representative of the Environment Directorate of the Regional Government of the TTA Region of Morocco, Mr. Mohamed Amrani underlined the innovative aspects of the development of the Rhiss-Nekkor aquifer management plan including the component dealing with submarine groundwater discharges, especially the coordination arrangements established among the involved stakeholders and the collaboration with the international experts. Mr. Amrani highlighted the participatory and consultative approach undertaken by the Regional Government of the TTA region for developing the ICZM plan, through the establishment of the Regional Coastal Zone-management Committee. Mr Amrani mentioned the three key achievements to date that is the diagnostic analysis of the coastal area, the integration of the green and of the blue economy, the scenario based spatial and temporal development patterns identified. Mr. Amrani stressed that the ICZM plan being developed is the combination of multiple factors, starting from the strategic objectives indicated in the national ICZM regulation, to the specific objectives indicated in the regional development plans, to the challenges and the operational solutions identified through the technical support by PAP/RAC, Plan Bleu and GWP-Med. Mr. Amrani explained the important preparatory work done by the Regional Directorate for the Environment, with the support from the Ministry, to prepare the ground for a productive and collaborative interaction and integration among the multi-stakeholder and multi-agency contributions from the different Executing Partners. He illustrated how the different projects and implementation phases are relating to each other and are interconnected in view to achieve the expected objectives. This has contributed to produce an innovative, multisectoral, integrated and coordinated effort allowing to address critical questions for coastal management: coastal urbanization, land use planning, society and economy, pollution and environmental risks, water governance, indicator based monitoring system and geographical information system.
18. The representative of the Montenegrin Ministry of the Environment, Ms. Milica Rudic, presented the national regulatory framework for coastal zone management in the country which includes the EU regulation on the matter, the ICZM Protocol, the 2015 national ICZM Strategy and action plan. Mrs. Rudic mentioned the key features socio-economic and environmental features of the Boka Kotorska area where the Child Projects 2.1 and SCCF are operating. Ms. Rudic mentioned the important support received from the Climagine methodology along the three workshops held in the country, to gather stakeholders from different sectors, discuss possible future scenarios and prioritize issues at stake in the coastal area and develop a shared diagnostic and vision for a sustainable future together with indicators to monitor the current and future state of the coastal area. Ms. Rudic indicated that the three municipalities involved in the preparation of the iCZM plan are now reviewing proposed measures outlined and that a first draft of the document is expected by the first half of 2024 together with the identified climate change adaptation measures

identified through the SCCF project. Ms. Rudic highlighted the outstanding support received under Component 2 of CP 2.1 for characterizing the Buna/Bojana transboundary coastal aquifer which is connected to valuable coastal ecosystems. Ms. Rudic outlined the important linkages established among the state of the aquifer, its vulnerability features and the land-based pollution sources brought by the Skodar Lake and the Drina river. Ms. Rudic mentioned the importance of the hydrogeological mathematic model developed with the support of scientific bodies to support decision making on the management of the aquifer and the first steps undertaken to establish a monitoring system for the aquifer. She reported on the initial steps undertaken for establishing a national dialogue on the conjunctive management of surface and ground water resources including with transboundary cooperation arrangements with Albania very useful, developed with scientific bodies and tool to support decision making and increasing sustainability of saline. Ms. Rudic concluded that the progress achieved across the two Components of CP 2.1 is considered extremely valuable taking also in consideration the difficult situation of the country following a cyberattack which triggered an important crisis of the public sector.

19. The representative of the Lebanese Ministry of the Environment, Mr. Adel Yacoub, illustrated the difficulties of the working environment in which the Lebanese activities of CP 2.1 are implemented in Lebanon. He mentioned the operational difficulties encountered by civil servants in accessing offices, in electricity and wi-fi availability, in accessing information and communication facilities. Notwithstanding this situation will not hinder the implementation of the activities under CP 2.1, considering also the commitment of the Ministry of the Environment to ICZM Protocol and the MedProgramme, in particular on the national priorities which are ICZM legislation, ICZM strategy and plans, ICZM inter-ministerial coordination unit, setting-up a specialized ICZM center, technical assistance for data management and coastal monitoring, for integrating gender in ICZM and for awareness raising. Mr. Yacoub highlighted the progress achieved to date at the national and local level and stressed on the importance of improved coordination mechanisms among the national institutions involved in MedProgramme and of clearer frameworks for the different inter-institutional child project coordination committees established in the country.
20. PAP/RAC thanked the Lebanese Ministry of the Environment for the confirmed commitment and clarified that while the ICZM Strategy is to be endorsed by the Council of Ministers upon proposal by the Ministry of the Environment, a possible risk for this expected result is that, due to the ongoing crisis, in this phase there is no Council of Ministers in place.
21. The Lebanese Ministry of the Environment clarified that a national Inter-institutional committee for coastal zone management requires a formal legislative set-up and should be formally established by decree of the Council of Ministers.
22. GWP-Med clarified that the NEXUS Inter-ministerial Committee was established under the initiative of the Ministry of Energy and Water to coordinate the NEXUS and water management related activities of Child Projects CP 2.1 and 2.2 and that GWP-Med was asked by the MoEW to coordinate this Committee and that GWP-Med had proposed to utilize this Committee as overall MedProgramme coordination Committee for Lebanon.
23. The Lebanese Ministry of the Environment suggested to keep two separate Inter-ministerial Committees for Water and ICZM and to establish coordination and collaboration arrangements among them.

Agenda item 5: CP 2.1 Project Workplan 2023 Q2-2024 Q1

24. PAP/RAC, Plan Bleu/RAC, GWDP Med and UNESCO IHP presented the workplan for component 1 and 2 of CP 2.1.

25. UNESCO stressed the importance of receiving timely requested financial resources, to ensure continuity of the commitment and of the work.
26. The PSCM meeting approved the work plan.

Agenda item 6: CP 2.1 Budget Forecast for Workplan 2023-2024

27. The MedProgramme Management Officer presented the budget forecast for 2023-Q2 - 2024 Q1, including the required revisions to the budget.
28. The Steering Committee approved the revision of the budget and the budget forecast for 2023-2024 with no objections or adjustments.

Agenda Item 7: Any other Business

29. Nothing to be reported under this agenda item.

Agenda Item 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

30. The Meeting participants reviewed and amended the draft conclusions and recommendations from the Meeting, which appear in Annex III of this Meeting report.
31. The absence of Bosnia-Herzegovina from the meeting room and the lack of the quorum required the MedPCU to send the revised draft conclusions and recommendations by email for no objection to all participating countries, seeking their final approval without objection. A timeframe of 10 days was allotted for the participating countries to review the transmitted document.

Agenda Item 9: Closure of the Meeting

32. Ms. Hamdan provided closing remarks at the end of the Third Steering Committee Meeting.

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Annex II**Provisional Agenda**

- Agenda item 1:** Opening of the Meeting
- Agenda item 2:** Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and Organization of Work
- Agenda item 3:** CP 2.1 Review of project implementation progress
Component 1: Coastal Zone Management
Component 2: Management of Coastal Aquifers and Related Ecosystems
- Agenda item 4:** The national perspective: the implementation in Morocco and Montenegro
- Agenda item 5:** CP 2.1 Workplan Q2 2023 - Q1 2024
Component 1: Coastal Zone Management
Component 2: Management of Coastal Aquifers and Related Ecosystems
- Agenda item 6:** CP 2.1 Annual Budget Q2 2023 - Q1 2024
Component 1: Coastal Zone Management
Component 2: Management of Coastal Aquifers and Related Ecosystems
- Agenda item 7:** Implementation of the Gender Action Plan for CP 2.1
- Agenda item 8:** Any other Business
- Agenda item 9:** Conclusions and Recommendations
- Agenda item 10:** Closure of the Meeting

TIMETABLE

Thursday, 8 June 2023		
Please note that all times are local		
10:00 – 10:15	Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting	
10:15 – 10:30	Agenda item 2: Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and Organization of Work	UNEP/MED WG.570/1
10:30 – 12:00	Agenda item 3: CP 2.1 Review of project implementation progress: Component 1: Coastal Zone Management Component 2: Management of Coastal Aquifers and Related Ecosystems	presentation
12:00 – 13:00	Agenda item 4: The national perspective: the implementation in Morocco and Montenegro	presentation
<i>13:00 – 14:30</i>	Break	
14:30 – 15:30	Agenda item 5: CP 2.1 Workplan Q3 2023 – Q4 2024 Component 1: Coastal Zone Management Component 2: Management of Coastal Aquifers and Related Ecosystems	UNEP/MED WG.570/2
15:30 - 16:00	Agenda item 6: CP 2.1 Annual Budget Q3 2023 – Q4 2024 Component 1: Coastal Zone Management Component 2: Management of Coastal Aquifers and Related Ecosystems	UNEP/MED WG.570/3
16:00 - 16:30	Agenda item 7: Implementation of the Gender Action Plan for CP 2.1	presentation
16.30 - 16:45	Agenda item 8: Any other Business	
16:45 – 17:00	Agenda item 9: Conclusions and Recommendations	UNEP/MED WG.570/4
17:00	Agenda item 10: Closure of the Meeting	

Annex III**Conclusions and Recommendations****Third Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) of the Child Project 2.1 “Mediterranean Coastal Zones Climate Resilience Water Security and Habitat Protection” (GEF ID 9687) of the Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing Environmental Security (GEF ID 9607)****Rabat, Morocco, 8 June 2023**

1. The Third Project Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) of Child Project 2.1 entitled “Mediterranean Coastal Zones Climate Resilience Water Security and Habitat Protection” (GEF ID 9687) was held in Rabat, Morocco, on 8 June 2023.
2. The Meeting was organized by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat/MedPCU in collaboration with the Executing Partners PAP/RAC, PB, GWP–Med, and UNESCO.
3. The Executing Partners presented the progress achieved since MedProgramme’s Second Steering Committee Meeting, in addition to the Annual Work Plan 2023 Q1-2024 Q2. Further to its deliberations, the SCM reached the following conclusions:
 - i. The SCM took note of the progress achieved since the MedProgramme’s Second Steering Committee Meeting held by videoconference on May 2022;
 - ii. The Steering Committee Meeting appreciated the efforts made by the different Executing Partners and involved national institutions to establish linkages CP 2.1 and the other two Child Projects under the Component 2 (Enhancing sustainability and climate resilience in the Mediterranean region) of the MedProgramme and encouraged the Executing Partners and national institutions to continue developing synergies and coordination arrangements in view to optimizing the utilization of available human and financial resources;
 - iii. The Steering Committee Meeting encouraged the countries, the relevant national institutions as well as the other regional initiatives to further improve the sharing of updated data related to the specific contexts under analysis and management planning with a view to ensure that proposed solutions reflect the actual status at the country level, both local and national;
 - iv. The SCM reviewed the Annual Work Plan 2023 Q2-2024 Q1 and its approval is pending the no-objection from participating countries;
 - v. The SCM reviewed and approved the different arrangements to be executed by the project for the following items, pending the no-objection from participating countries:
 - Conclusion of Plan Bleu/RAC’s activities concerning the development of a Conceptual Framework for Coastal Observation in Q4 2023.
 - Pursue the Climagine process in the Moroccan and Montenegrin pilot sites in support of the elaboration of Coastal Plans by PAP/RAC.
 - Mobilization of the budget initially destined for national activities in Egypt to support two complementary activities in Lebanon i) the revision of the draft National ICZM Strategy, led by PAP/RAC, and ii) a cycle of 4 integrated Climagine workshops to support the development of an Integrated Management Plan for the Damour area with all Project partners. Together, these activities will form the backbone of the development of a regional Climagine Guide for ICZM Practitioners at the end of 2024 for the three countries.
 - UNESCO will continue to support the beneficiary countries and national experts in the finalization of the characterization of the priority coastal aquifers. The assessment includes the aquifers vulnerability, groundwater dependent ecosystems and the interactions of freshwater and marine systems regarding Submarine

Groundwater Discharges and seawater intrusion. The final reports will include technical and management recommendations that will be included in the priority coastal aquifers management plans.

- UNESCO will organize, in collaboration with national institutions, the National Dialogues on Conjunctive Management of Surface and Groundwater in 6 countries which will produce recommendations for potential conjunctive management solutions. In addition, UNESCO will organize a second regional training course on the legal and policy aspects of conjunctive management.
- UNESCO will support the preparation of the Integrated Management Plan for the Damour coastal area in Lebanon in collaboration with all partners of CP 2.1.

4. The MedPCU presented the budget forecast for the CP 2.1 for the period 2023 Q2-2024 Q1. Further to its deliberation, the Steering Committee reviewed the annual project budget as presented, including the following items:

- PAP/RAC's request to reallocate respectively 30 % and 26 % of funds from the international and national consultants on CCI LCC to "contractual services", considering that the initial team that developed the methodology, supported by the University of Split won the tender to provide capacity building for the national experts of all countries and supervision of the calculations of the baseline values assessment.
- PAP/RAC's request to reallocate USD 50,000 from "Grant to IP- Meetings for preparation of Strategy and IMC meetings and Meetings for Preparation of Plans and IMC meetings" to "Operating and Other Direct Costs" (BL: Meetings on Strategy, and Plans, and IMC (35.000 USD) and to hospitality (15.000USD)).
- PAP/RAC's request to reallocate 40% of funds under "national consultants on ICZM Protocol" to sub-contractors on ICZM Protocol