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Agenda item 3: Report by the Secretariat on Work Carried Out and Progress in the Implementation of Recommendations of the 16th Meeting of the MCSD

Progress Report on Work Carried Out since the 16th Meeting of the MCSD

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UN Environment/MAP
Athens, 2017

Introduction

1. The 19th Conference of the Parties of the Barcelona Convention (COP 19, Athens, Greece, February 2016) confirmed that the MAP system continues to be a very relevant and effective regional framework to implement sustainable development policies and concrete actions on priorities agreed at regional and sub-regional levels. A number of strategic documents were delivered, including the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD 2016-2025); the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan (SCP AP); the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan; the Regional Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships 2016-2021; the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF).
2. The recommendations of the 16th Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD, Marrakech, Morocco, June 2015), as contained in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.416/8, were reflected by the Secretariat in the final draft decisions related to these strategic documents prior submission to and approval by the Contracting Parties at COP 19.
3. This progress report covers activities and outputs in relation to the MSSD 2016-2025 and the MCSD which were carried out in the period between June 2015 and May 2017, with emphasis on the most recent ones. It contains the following sections:
 - a) Information on relevant sustainable development activities;
 - b) Progress achieved in the implementation of the MSSD 2016-2025 and other relevant activities undertaken;
 - c) Emerging issues to be addressed.
4. Specific aspects of the implementation of the MSSD 2016-2025 are further addressed in the other working documents prepared for this meeting, and especially the “Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD 2016-2025): Implementation and Monitoring Plan” (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.441/5).

A. Information on relevant sustainable development activities

The MSSD 2016-2025 and the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals

5. The MSSD 2016-2025 was adopted as a strategic guiding document for all stakeholders and partners to translate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the regional, sub-regional and national levels. The Strategy provides a integrative policy framework for securing a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It aims to adapt international commitments to regional conditions, guide national strategies for sustainable development, and stimulate regional cooperation between stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable development. The Strategy is also expected to boost synergies between the work of key national and regional stakeholders, by providing a commonly-agreed framework, thereby leading to increased efficiency in the implementation of sustainable development in the Mediterranean.
6. The protection of the Mediterranean marine environment and coastal zones remains the priority objective of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. Therefore, the aim of the Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021 (Decision IG.22/01, also adopted at COP 19) is to guide the path for the protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and contribute to the sustainable development of the Mediterranean Region for the period 2016-2021. The improvement of the quality of the marine environment remains the priority objective of the Barcelona Convention, specified through its Protocols and recently (COP 18) with the commitment to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES). The GES constitutes a major step towards sustainable development, while the integration of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) in the management of human activities becomes fundamental for the fulfillment of the MTS vision.

7. It should be noted that the vision of the MTS 2016-2021 – “a healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse contributing to sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations” – is inspired by the vision of the MSSD 2016-2025. The following elements of the MSSD 2016-2025 have contributed to the vision of the MTS 2016-2021: (a) Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development, and (b) Addressing cross-cutting issues that lie in the interface between environment and development.

8. The MSSD 2016-2025 is based on the principle that socio-economic development needs to be harmonized with the protection of the environment and of natural resources. As highlighted in its subtitle (*Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development*), the MSSD is underpinned by the conviction that investment in the environment is the best way to secure long-term sustainable job creation and socio-economic development for the present and future generations.

9. The MSSD 2016-2025 takes also into account key milestones of the environmental policy agenda at the global level. It is in line with the Rio+20 Outcome Document “The Future We Want” and represents an opportunity for echoing the SDGs, and especially SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”, in an integrated manner. It also considers the new climate agreement of the UNFCCC COP 21 (Paris, France, November-December 2015), as a timely opportunity to tackle climate change issues.

10. The 2030 Agenda acknowledges the importance of the regional and sub-regional dimensions, regional economic integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development. Regional and sub-regional frameworks are recognized as facilitating the effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete actions at the national level. Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda welcomes the cooperation of regional and sub-regional commissions (such as the MCSD) and organizations for follow-up and review, and encourages states to identify the most suitable regional fora in which to engage. The MSSD 2016-2025 responds exactly to those provisions of the 2030 Agenda. It was developed in parallel with the process of definition of the SDGs and was informed by that process (Table 1).

Table 1: Links between the MSSD 2016-2025 Objectives and the SDGs

MSSD 2016-2025 Objectives	Sustainable Development Goals
1. Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas	14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
2. Promoting resource management, food production and food security through sustainable forms of rural development	2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
3. Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities	11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
4. Addressing climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean	13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
5. Transition towards a green and blue economy	8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

6. Improving governance in support of sustainable development	16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development
Cross-cutting sustainable development goals related to social issues	1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

Source: MSSD 2016-2025

11. Officially adopted in September 2015, the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs came into force in January 2016. The global set of 17 SDGs, together with relevant and measurable targets (169) and indicators, aim at guiding global and national development agendas and environmental policies until 2030. Since social, economic, and environmental issues and challenges for current and future generations are definitely interlinked, only the integration between the three dimensions of sustainable development will make possible the achievement of a long-term vision towards human and environmental well-being. Universally applicable, through a well-balanced approach of these three dimensions, the SDGs address enduring issues and emerging challenges faced by societies and the planet. Their objective is to end poverty, fight inequalities and injustice, and tackle climate change issues by 2030. They can be considered as an answer to aspirations for peace and stability among and within countries, prosperity and well-being for all, preservation of the environment, and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity. They represent a key milestone towards social inclusion, economic resilience and environmentally sustainable development.

12. The Mediterranean Region should remain a frontrunner within the Regional Sea Conventions at the global level and under the UN Environment auspices by implementing the SDGs. To this end, the MSSD 2016-2025 is the means to translate the 2030 Agenda into the regional, sub-regional and national levels in the Mediterranean, endorsing global aspirations shared by all countries of the world, while adapting these aspirations to the specificities of the Mediterranean.

13. SDGs are very relevant to the work of the MAP-Barcelona Convention system. SDG 14, focusing on conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources, is of primary importance for a Regional Seas Programme, but other SDGs are also relevant for the MAP system, as noted in table 1, and particularly as follows:

- SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;
- SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns;
- SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;
- SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

14. The implementation of SDG 14 is very high in the international agenda; the MCSD meeting will follow the UN Conference “Our oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14” (New York, 5-9 June 2017), while the Conference “Our Ocean: An Ocean for Life” will take place in Malta on 5-6 October 2017. Therefore, the 17th MCSD meeting provides an excellent opportunity to discuss and enhance linkages with the global sustainable development processes, especially in relation to SDG 14.

Relevant recent and upcoming events/activities of global dimension

15. Recent and upcoming events of global dimension on oceans and marine issues represent great opportunities in terms of visibility and to promote the work of the MAP-Barcelona Convention,

MCSO and MSSD 2016-2025. The most recent events of relevance are presented below, noting also the involvement of the UN Environment/MAP Secretariat:

- The Secretariat participated to the high-level Conference organized by France in February 2017 on “Mediterranean Plan for blue growth”. This national initiative of regional cooperation is part of the coalition on Oceans and Climate of UNFCCC COP 21, and builds on existing programmes and projects developed at national and regional level, and takes particularly into account MAP activities and actions.
- The Secretariat participated at the UNEP/EC Workshop on Area-based Management and Regional Cooperation for the Implementation of Ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals (Brussels, Belgium, 9-10 February 2017) where it presented the case study “Delivering the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 through a highly inclusive process to translate the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs at the regional level”, as one of the case studies to highlight experiences and lessons learnt of the actual institutional cooperation and/or coordinated policy development between/across regional organizations/mechanisms.
- UN Environment/MAP, represented by the national focal point and Bureau member from Spain, participated in a side event organized on 4 April 2017 by UN Environment in New York on the margins of the BBNJ PrepCom meeting. The focus was on the Mediterranean experience, and especially on (i) the consultative process leading to the preparation of the MSSD 2016-2025; and (ii) the cooperation between UN Environment/MAP and GFCM.
- The G7 Italian Presidency focuses on the Mediterranean marine environment. The Secretariat, in collaboration with Italy, co-organised the G7 Workshop on Marine Litter, entitled “Mainstreaming the work of the Regional Sea Programmes towards the better implementation of the G7 Action Plan and the achievement of the global commitments on marine litter” (Rome, Italy, 20-21 April 2017). The Secretariat was involved in moderating two consecutive sessions of the workshop, while the Coordinator made a keynote address highlighting the work of MAP in the field of marine litter and the efforts to address this environmental challenge. The workshop acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension of responses to marine litter and the necessity to ensure implementation by the G7 Countries of the Action Plan to Combat Marine Litter, in synergy with the Regional Seas Programmes. The outcome of the workshop will provide feedback to the forthcoming meeting of Environment Ministers of the G7 (Bologna, Italy, June 2017) where the MAP Coordinator will be a moderator and MAP will provide input to the meeting.
- UN Environment/MAP will participate in the UN Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14 that will be held from 5 to 9 June 2017 in New York. The meeting is to be attended by both the MAP Coordinator and the President of the Bureau, Ms. Christina Baritaki, since it will be an excellent opportunity to showcase the work of UN Environment/MAP and the Barcelona Convention and increase its visibility and impact. Three side events were submitted to the Conference organizers, in which UN Environment/MAP has a co-organizer role: (a) a side-event proposed by European Commission, UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention and GFCM on the Implementation of the ecosystem approach at the regional level for the coordinated achievement of the targets of SDG 14, (b) a side-event proposed by MedPAN, UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention, CaMPAM, RAMPAN, NAMPAN, WIOMSA, HELCOM, French Biodiversity Agency, on Regional MPA networks in action, and (c) a side-event proposed by Legambiente Onlus, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) - UN Environment/MAP, European Environment Agency, BioPlastic industry, Environmental Alliance for the Mediterranean and Union for the Mediterranean, on multi-stakeholders governance for tackling marine litter in the Mediterranean Sea.
- The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development will take place in New York on 10-19 July 2017, where the voluntary national reviews (VNR) will also be presented. It should be noted that several Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention were involved in this process: Egypt, France, Montenegro, Morocco, and Turkey in 2016; Cyprus, Italy,

Monaco, and Slovenia in 2017. The pilot test of the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism, as recommended by Annex II of the Reform of the MCS (Decision IG.22/17) is directly relevant to the VNRs under the HLPF. The MCS, as an advisory body to the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention and a forum for debate, can provide substantial contribution on these issues, in view also of COP 20 of the Barcelona Convention (Tirana, Albania, December 2017).

- The EU will host the fourth high-level “Our Ocean” Conference in Malta on 5-6 October 2017. The conference aims to inspire and empower a new generation of leaders, entrepreneurs, scientists and civil society to identify solutions and commit to actions for safe, secure, clean and sustainably managed oceans. UN Environment/MAP will have an active role in this Conference.
- The third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) will be held from 4-6 December 2017, in Nairobi, Kenya, with the high-level segment taking place on 5-6 December, and the Open Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives from 29 November to 1 December.
- This sequence of events will be concluded by COP 20 of the Barcelona Convention. The exact theme of the COP is expected to be decided by the Bureau at its 84th meeting (Athens, Greece, 19-20 June 2017) and will follow the relevant conclusion of the 83rd Bureau meeting (Tirana, Albania, 25-26 October 2017), which suggested the COP to focus on the implementation of the SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”, addressing in particular land-sea interaction, including ICZM, marine biodiversity, marine litter/plastics, in relation to specific sectors such as tourism.

16. Beyond the key occasions presented above, UN Environment/MAP participated and undertook outreach activities in a number of events during this period. Such events include the following:

- 17 -18 July 2016: Plan Bleu participated to the MedCOP Climate 2016, in Tangiers, Morocco, to present the MSSD 2016-2025, and especially its 4th Objective “Addressing Climate Change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean”. SCP/RAC also participated actively to the MedCOP by organizing a workshop on SCP, circular economy and climate change in the Mediterranean.
- 24 and 28 October 2016: The Coordinating Unit and REMPEC participated in the 70th Session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 70), held at IMO Headquarters in London, UK.
- 11-16 November 2016: During UNFCCC COP 22 in Marrakesh, Morocco, UN Environment/MAP organized with Plan Bleu/RAC and PAP/RAC, a side event around the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework. UN Environment/MAP also participated to the closing session of the “Ocean Day”, which focused on action in the Mediterranean.
- 21-23 November 2016: UN Environment/MAP participated in the 30th anniversary of the addition of the Marine Environmental Studies Laboratory (MESL) to the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Environment Laboratories, at a ceremony held in Monaco during the 6th meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS.
- 28 November-1 December 2016: The Forum of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (Tangier, Morocco), organised by MedPAN, SPA/RAC and the *Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte Contre la Désertification*, gathered around 300 key players involved in the marine environment coming from 33 countries. This Forum was an opportunity for a mid-term assessment of the implementation of the 2012 MPA Roadmap and led to propose new recommendations to tackle the challenges faced by MPAs, especially those related to climate change, with an integrated and long term vision (the Tangier Declaration).
- 8-9 December 2016: The MAP Coordinator participated to the Ministerial meeting on Education and Sustainable Development, held in Cyprus, supporting the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for the Education on Sustainable Development (MSESD).

- 15-16 February 2017: The MAP Coordinator participated in the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Ocean Conference, in New York. UN Environment/MAP also contributed to the Regional Seas Programme side event “From regional to global: shared seas and shared actions for the sustainability of our oceans”. It also participated in a side event organized by the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from land-based Activities on “Land and Ocean Interactions in a Changing World”.
- 13-16 March 2017: The Secretariat and RACs participated to the 1st meeting of the UfM Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (WGECC) and 4th meeting of the UfM Climate Change Expert Group (CCEG), in Barcelona, Spain.
- 25-26 April 2017: The Coordinator attended the EU Council Informal Meeting of Environment Ministers (Valletta, Malta,) and addressed the EU Ministers on behalf of the UN Environment and of its MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat.

B. Progress achieved in the implementation of the MSSD 2016-2025 and other relevant activities undertaken

Process towards adoption of COP 19 Decisions IG.22/2 and IG.22/17

17. During the period between June 2015 and February 2016, the focus was on obtaining COP 19 approval for the recommendations emerging out of the 16th Meeting of the MCSD and the 17th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Marrakesh, Morocco, June 2015) related to the MSSD Review and MCSD Reform. The MCSD Steering Committee, in cooperation with the Secretariat and Plan Bleu, drafted two decisions.

18. These draft decisions were submitted to the MAP National Focal Points for consideration during their meeting in October 2015 and, after adjustments, to the Contracting Parties for adoption during their 19th Ordinary Meeting. The two decisions were adopted by COP 19.

19. Following Decisions IG.22/2 and IG.22/17, several activities have been implemented by the Secretariat, with the support especially of Plan Bleu/RAC, as presented below.

Publication of the MSSD 2016-2025

20. In June 2016, the MSSD 2016-2025 was published in a user-friendly layout and format. Hard copies were distributed during events organized by the Secretariat and MAP Components. The publication is also downloadable online in the webpage of both the UN Environment/MAP and Plan Bleu websites.

21. In addition, the third stakeholder news brief of the MSSD Review process was distributed in March 2016 by email sent to about 1,000 contacts; this news brief is available online in the Plan Bleu website.

Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD 2016-2025) Implementation and Monitoring Plan

22. The Secretariat prepared the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD 2016-2025) Implementation and Monitoring Plan for submission to and consideration by the MCSD Steering Committee during its 18th Meeting (Athens, Greece, 18-19 January 2016). The Secretariat took into account recommendations from the members of the MCSD to update this document, which is presented to the MCSD as working document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.441/4.

Mediterranean Sustainable Development Dashboard

23. Following key output 1.4.2 of the MAP Programme of Work and Budget 2016-2017, under the guidance of the Secretariat, in close collaboration with the MCSD Steering Committee, with the support of MAP Partners and other RACs, Plan Bleu has undertaken the development of the Mediterranean Sustainable Development Dashboard.
24. A first core set of priority indicators was defined during the Regional Workshop “How to monitor the MSSD 2016-2025 implementation?” organized by Plan Bleu (Saint Laurent du Var, France, 30-31 March 2016). (<http://planbleu.org/en/event/regional-workshop-how-monitor-mssd-2016-2025-implementation>).
25. The assessment of the first set of indicators and a first version of the Mediterranean Sustainable Development Dashboard were presented and discussed during the Technical Workshop “How to monitor the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 and the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean?” co-organized by Plan Bleu and SCP/RAC (Barcelona, Spain, 17 October 2016). (<http://planbleu.org/en/event/technical-workshop-how-monitor-mediterranean-strategy-sustainable-development-2016-2025>; <http://planbleu.org/en/outils-et-methodes/indicateurs>).
26. In order to strengthen the cooperation of MAP Components on indicator related activities, synergies between Plan Bleu, SCP/RAC and PAP/RAC have been established for the MSSD 2016-2025 Indicators, SCP AP Indicators and Blue Economy Indicators, the latter linked to the 5th Objective of the MSSD 2016-2025. The project “Blue economy for a healthy Mediterranean - Measuring, Monitoring and Promoting an environmentally sustainable economy in the Mediterranean region”, funded by the MAVA foundation and gathering Plan Bleu, SCP/RAC and PAP/RAC, supports the cooperation between these three RACs. In this framework the Project Conference “A blue economy for a sustainable development of the Mediterranean region” was organized by Plan Bleu in Marseille, France, on 30-31 May 2017.
27. Following the recommendations of the MCSD Steering Committee, Plan Bleu prepared in February 2017 a list of 48 proposed indicators (listed per objective and accompanied by a short text containing description, relation with other/existing sets of indicators and brief information on how they will be used). This document has been discussed and reviewed during the 18th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Athens, Greece, 18-19 January 2017) and the Plan Bleu National Focal Points meeting (Nice, France, 25-26 April 2017); the comments have been collected and consolidated by Plan Bleu, also with the aim to reduce the number of indicators.
28. The Mediterranean Sustainable Development Dashboard, prepared following the process described above, is presented to the MCSD in documents UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.441/6 and UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.441/Inf.3. The 17th Meeting of the MCSD will discuss the draft Mediterranean Sustainable Development Dashboard for fine-tuning and for endorsing the list of indicators. The MCSD will be invited to support the submission of the Mediterranean Sustainable Development Dashboard to the Meeting of the MAP National Focal Points (September 2017) and then to the Contracting Parties at COP 20 (December 2017).

Preparation of the MED 2050 report: Draft Roadmap

29. In parallel to the Mediterranean Sustainable Development Dashboard and in a coordinated manner with the MSSD 2016-2025 implementation, following the key output 1.4.1 of the MAP Programme of Work and Budget 2016-2017, the Secretariat (through Plan Bleu/RAC) is preparing a roadmap towards a Mediterranean State of the Environment Report and a roadmap to conduct a new prospective study aiming at exploring possible futures of the Mediterranean environment and development in 2050 (MED 2050). The Draft MED 2050 Roadmap is presented to the MCSD as document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.441/7.

Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER)

30. Following key output 1.3.3 of the MAP Programme of Work and Budget 2016-2017, taking into account the Annex II of the Decision IG.22/17 on the Reform of the MCSD, under the guidance of the Coordinating Unit and in close collaboration with the MCSD Steering Committee, Plan Bleu/RAC is implementing the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) of National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSDs).
31. Based on the voluntary and equal participation principles, the SIMPEER aims at engaging and fostering dialogue between two or more Mediterranean countries for a mutual improvement and learning process on NSSDs. The SIMPEER seeks to establish within an agreed methodology the exchange of experiences, policies and good practices on implementing sustainable development at the national level, as opposed to creating a scrutiny framework between reviewers and reviewed countries.
32. The SIMPEER represents an important incentive to enable NSSDs review in line with the MSSD 2016-2025 and as a contribution to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs.
33. Three volunteer countries expressed their interest to participate in the SIMPEER pilot test in 2016-2017, namely France, Montenegro, and Morocco, representing the three groups of countries of UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention.
34. The methodological report and roadmap (presented in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.441/Inf.5) were discussed at the SIMPEER first technical meeting (Barcelona, Spain, 18 October 2016) and during the 18th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Athens, Greece 18-19 January 2017). The participants expressed their appreciations on the process and achievements.
35. Following the collection of background national documents and the completion of a questionnaire in cooperation with National Focal Points of the three volunteer Contracting Parties, the outputs of the desktop analysis were discussed with national policymakers and other stakeholders during country missions in Montenegro (11-14 January 2017), Morocco (7-8 February 2017), and France (27-28 March 2017). Based on the country missions' results and desktop analysis of legal and strategic national documents focusing on sustainable development, draft national reports were elaborated by the project team and shared among the three volunteer Contracting Parties' national contact points.
36. The Peer Review Meeting (27 April 2017, Nice, France) was conducted to review and discuss draft national reports by peers and to formulate key recommendations towards the final report of the SIMPEER pilot test. Each Contracting Party was invited to present its own draft national report, while the peers made recommendations. Peer countries shared their respective national experiences, commented on the success stories and good practices, and provided recommendations for addressing challenges that countries are still facing in the implementation of their NSSD. The Report of the Peer Review Meeting is presented in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.441/Inf.6.

Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award (implementing one of the Flagship Initiatives of the 3rd Objective of the MSSD 2016-2025)

37. As described in Decision IG.22/19, the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award aims to recognize and reward the efforts of local authorities to improve the environment and the quality of life and promote sustainable development in Mediterranean coastal towns and cities. It also aims to encourage local authorities to move towards a more environment friendly future and enable them to act as a role-model to inspire other towns and cities.
38. By definition, a sustainable coastal city is: "A coastal city in harmony with the sea, utilizing its resources efficiently, equitably and sustainably, reducing its impact on marine and coastal environment and climate change, and managing the environment for the benefit of current and future generations". Therefore, an environment friendly city is a coastal city in which people enjoy a high quality of life and where sustainable development takes place within the carrying capacity of healthy ecosystems.

39. In summer/autumn 2016, the Secretariat proceeded with work to finalize the nomination and selection criteria and process regarding the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award decided in COP 19.
40. The following actions were taken in this respect: (i) a Task Force was created (as per Annex of Decision IG.22/19) composed of representatives from the Secretariat and MAP Components, (ii) a document describing the nomination and selection process was drafted, together with an application form, (iii) the two above mentioned documents were revised by the Task Force and were presented to the 83rd Meeting of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (25-26 October 2016, Tirana, Albania) as an Annex to document UNEP(DEPI)/MED BUR.83/6 “Report by the Secretariat on specific issues”.
41. The Bureau welcomed the work done by the Secretariat and the Task Force on the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award and approved the nomination and selection process and the Application Form, as amended during the meeting.
42. The Bureau also requested the Secretariat to proceed with launching the award in accordance to this process, so that the first, pilot, edition of the Award is granted at COP 20 and the following editions to be refined based on the experience of this edition of the award, as appropriate.
43. A Draft Communication Plan for the Award has been prepared during October/November 2016 and was reviewed by the Task Force.
44. Along with several activities of communication (visibility material, web stories, press releases, side events, etc.), the way forward and the expected outputs until December 2017 are presented below:
- a) May 2017: Graphic identity and launching of the award (call for applicants, news brief letter to MAP National Focal Points);
 - b) June/July 2017: Initial screening of the applications by the Secretariat;
 - c) August/September 2017: Short listing by the Technical Committee (Task Force supported by three independent eminent experts);
 - d) October 2017: Selection of the winner by the Jury (the Bureau members and the President of the MCS D Steering Committee);
 - e) December 2017: Award delivery during COP 20.
45. The call for applicants was opened for a period of 30 days on 16 May 2017. All information, together with the application form, a specific leaflet, and a help desk, are available on the Plan Bleu website: <http://planbleu.org/fr/prix-pour-les-villes-respectueuses-de-lenvironnement-istanbul-environment-friendly-city-award-2016>
46. A more detailed nomination and selection process for this first edition of the Award, as well as the Communication Plan and Application Form are presented in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.428/Inf.6.

The Science Policy Interface on Climate and Environmental Change (implementing one of the Flagship Initiatives of the 4th Objective of the MSSD 2016-2025)

47. Regarding the “Establish[ment of] a regional science-policy interface mechanism, (...) with a view to preparing consolidated regional scientific assessments and guidance on climate change trends, impacts and adaptation and mitigation options”, which is one of the MSSD 2016-2025 Flagship Initiatives, Plan Bleu and other partners (including France, the Principality of Monaco, the Union for the Mediterranean, and the Government of Catalonia, Spain) have provided support to the “Mediterranean Experts Network on Environmental and Climate Change (MedECC)”.
48. MedECC works towards two directions of specific interest for the implementation of the MSSD 2016-2025 and the RCCAF, as follows: (i) producing improved assessments and a comprehensive synthesis of global change knowledge in the Mediterranean region; and, (ii) building a

regional Science Policy Interface on climatic and other environmental changes across the Mediterranean. Gathering more than 260 experts and scientists coming from most of the Mediterranean countries and covering all scientific disciplines, MedECC launched its website (www.medecc.org).

49. MedECC also participated in several Mediterranean events, such as: MEDCOP21 (Marseille, France, 4-5 June 2015); two side events organized at UNFCCC COP 21 (Paris, France, 4-5 December 2015); MEDCOP Climate 2016 (Tangier, Morocco, 18-19 July 2016); a side event at UNFCCC COP 22 (Marrakech, Morocco, 14 November 2016); Meeting with UfM Member States (Barcelona, Spain, 13 March 2017). Furthermore, UfM Member States welcomed the willingness of the scientists gathered within the MedECC network to contribute to the vulnerability assessment of the Mediterranean regarding climate and environmental impacts on relevant sectors (1st UfM Working Group on Environment and Climate Change, Barcelona, Spain, 14-15 March 2017).

50. An important step was the MedECC Scoping Workshop (Aix-en-Provence, France, 10-12 October 2016 – label UNFCCC-COP 22), co-funded by the Principality of Monaco, gathering 68 participants from 16 countries. The objective of this workshop was to define the thematic scope and structure of the first MedECC report, which will be published in 2019.

51. 18 months after its creation, the MedECC initiative succeeded in building a network of scientific experts and in gaining political support from Mediterranean countries and IGOs. The objective is now to institutionalize the network by confirming its governance and strengthening its science-policy interface approach (dialogue with policymakers and governance bodies).

52. Regarding Science Policy Interface (SPI), in the framework of the UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention EcApMEDII project, Plan Bleu is coordinating an activity related to the strengthening of the SPI for the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) to the management of human activities in the Mediterranean, with the ultimate objective to achieve a Good Environmental Status (GES) of the Mediterranean Sea.

53. The SPI for EcAp is an initiative complementary to the MedECC. Exchanges need to be encouraged between scientists and policy-makers already involved in those two Mediterranean SPI initiatives.

C. Emerging issues to be addressed

Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean

54. Tourism is a sector closely linked with the approach of the MSSD 2016-2025, which aims at investing in the environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development. Tourism is vital for many Mediterranean countries, as a major pillar of Mediterranean economies, offering consistent employment and economic growth. Over time, Mediterranean destinations have developed a unique blend of tourism products covering leisure, health, sports, nature, business, as well as cruise and culture. However, the economic growth related with the tourism sector has often been to the detriment of environmental integrity and social equity.

55. Following the preparation of specific background documents, Plan Bleu in partnership with the French Agency for Development (AFD) organized a Regional Workshop on Sustainable Tourism in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries (Marseille, France, 23-24 May 2016). Based on the outputs of this workshop and on previous activities undertaken by the Secretariat and its components on the cross-cutting theme of Tourism, Plan Bleu prepared a key publication entitled “Implementing the MSSD 2016-2025 - Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean: State of Play and Strategic Directions”, with input from other RACs, namely SCP/RAC, PAP/RAC, and SPA/RAC, with the support of the French Development Agency.

56. In addition to the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean (ICZM Protocol), the recently adopted MSSD 2016-2025 and SCP Action Plan are making a

contribution to tackling issues that threaten the long-term sustainability of the Mediterranean region and the tourism sector itself. Inherent societal characteristics and the exponential development of the tourism sector are generating a need for a dedicated set of actions which are now included in the Strategic Directions for Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean, as presented in the aforementioned publication.

57. These Strategic Directions for Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean could be discussed within the MCSD towards the elaboration of possible Regional Strategic Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean, for further consideration by the Contracting Parties. Indeed, this crucial issue has not been discussed for some time within the MAP system in general and the MCSD in particular. Sustainability of the tourism sector is now addressed, following its cross-cutting approach, in the MSSD 2016-2025, while it is also one of the four priority areas of the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production.

58. It is worth noting the conclusions of the Meeting of the Plan Bleu National Focal Points (25-26 April, Nice, France) on this topic:

- Tourism sustainability could be tackled by activities under the ICZM Protocol & SCP Action Plan;
- While “Regional Strategic Framework” is not adapted, “Guidelines towards sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean” are more appropriate for sharing best available practices;
- There is a need to review the existing global, regional (incl. MSSD) or other guidelines on sustainable tourism and assess the needs for any adjustment relevant to the Mediterranean;
- The Guidelines should focus on nautical activities and pleasure boating, including cruise.

Delivery of the MSSD 2016-2025, as the result of a long term collective process

59. The implementation of the MSSD 2016-2025 is a collective process. Although facilitated by the MAP system, it is the participation and active role of all stakeholders that will play a decisive role in its delivery.

60. The MAP system, which includes the Secretariat and its components, as well as the MCSD, should provide leadership and guidance with respect to implementing MSSD 2016-2025. In addition, the MAP system can provide a platform for the exchange of relevant information, experiences and synergies developed at the regional or sub-regional levels.

61. The MCSD is a key structure within the MAP system for supporting the development and implementation of the MSSD 2016-2025. As a central point of reference and bringing together representatives of the Parties and stakeholders involved with sustainable development, the MCSD has to work closely, supported by the Secretariat, with the relevant organizations for the effective implementation of the MSSD 2016-2025.

62. Taking into consideration the above, it is of primary importance that the Secretariat, MAP Components, MCSD members, and MAP partners report regularly on their own efforts to facilitate the ownership, implementation, monitoring, and delivery of the MSSD 2016-2025.