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10th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group

Istanbul, Türkiye, 11 September 2023

Agenda Item 4: 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report

**Report of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON)
Biodiversity and Fisheries – Athens, Greece, 9-10 March 2023**

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**United Nations
Environment Programme
Mediterranean Action Plan**

28 April 2023

Original: English

Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Biodiversity and Fisheries
Athens, Greece, 9-10 March 2023

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SPA/RAC
Tunis, 2023

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Introduction

1. In the framework of the UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC Programme of Work 2022-2023 adopted by the 22nd Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, Antalya, Turkey, 2-5 December 2021, the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) for Biodiversity and Fisheries (hereinafter referred to as “Meeting”) was organized on 09 and 10 March 2023 in Athens (Greece), by the Specially Protected Area Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) (hereinafter referred to as “Secretariat”).

Participation

2. The following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention were represented at the Meeting: Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria and Tunisia.

3. The Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), and the Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) were represented as observers.

4. The Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan - Barcelona Convention Secretariat (UNEP/MAP) and the Information and Communication Regional Activity Centre (INFO/RAC) were represented at the Meeting.

5. The full list of participants is attached as Annex I to the present report.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

Information Document

UNEP/MED WG.547/Inf.2

6. The Meeting was opened on 09 March 2023 at 09.00 (UTC+2) by Mr. Christos MATHIOUDAKIS, representative of the host country, Mr. Khalil ATTIA, SPA/RAC Director and Mr. Gabino GONZALEZ, MAP Deputy Coordinator

7. Mr. Mathioudakis reminded that the Mediterranean is one of the global hot spots, which emphasizes the importance of its conservation. In this regard, he particularly acknowledged the great efforts of SPA/RAC in implementing the SPA/BD Protocol and undertaking number of activities aimed at the effective conservation of the Mediterranean biodiversity.

8. Mr. Attia reminded of the context and background of the MED QSR 2023 development, particularly referring to the MED QSR 2023 Roadmap.

9. Mr. Gonzalez accentuated more than 5 decades long dedication and efforts of the UNEP/MAP towards conservation of the Mediterranean’s environment. He particularly stressed the importance of the MED QSR, as the comprehensive assessment of the state of the environment in the Mediterranean, which is based on the holistic approach. He closed his welcome remarks by inviting all participants to discuss about the proposed reports – components of the MED QSR 2023, emphasizing that the contribution of Contracting Parties and other experts is crucial for the preparation of the MED QSR.

Agenda item 2: Organizational matters

Working Documents	UNEP/MED WG.547/1 Rev.1 UNEP/MED WG.547/2
Information Document	UNEP/MED WG.547/Inf.1

a) Rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMON) for Biodiversity and Fisheries

10. The Meeting agreed that the rules of procedure for Meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols (UNEP/IG.43/6, Annex XI) would apply mutatis mutandis to their deliberations.

b) Election of Officers

11. Subject to Rule 20 of the rules of procedure mentioned at para. 2(a), the Meeting unanimously elected the following officers from among the representatives of the Contracting Parties:

Chairperson: Mr Moustafa FOUDA (Egypt),

Vice chairpersons: Ms. Milena BATAKOVIĆ (Montenegro)
Ms. Kamila HALICHE (Algeria)

Rapporteur: Mr. Leonardo TUNESI (Italy)

c) Adoption of the Provisional Agenda

12. Mr. ATTIA informed the Meeting that the planned Agenda item on EO3 – Fisheries will not be discussed at this CORMON Meeting, since the GFCM Secretariat, in charge of preparation of this Chapter, has not yet prepared and submitted the document.

13. The Meeting adopted the meeting Agenda and Provisional Annotated Agenda (except EO3 Agenda item), including the proposed timetable, circulated in documents UNEP/MED WG.547/1 Rev.1 and UNEP/MED WG.547/2, respectively.

14. The agenda is attached as Annex II to the present report.

15. Simultaneous interpretation in English and French was provided during the Meeting.

Agenda Item 3: 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MED QSR): Content on Biodiversity, Non-indigenous species and Fisheries Ecological Objectives (EOs)

Working Documents	UNEP/MED WG. 547/Inf.3 UNEP/MED WG.547/3 UNEP/MED WG.547/4 UNEP/MED WG.547/5 UNEP/MED WG.547/6 UNEP/MED WG.547/7 UNEP/MED WG.547/8
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16. The Secretariat introduced the agenda item 3 and provided a general information about reports

prepared under this Agenda item, referring to the document UNEP/MED WG. 547/Inf 3.

3.1. Chapter on EO1

3.1.1. Benthic habitats

17. The Secretariat introduced and presented the elaboration of the document UNEP/MED WG.547/3 “2023 MED QSR: Benthic Habitats (EO1) Chapter”. The Secretariat explained the methodological approach, which builds on the MED QSR 2017, with the aim to provide more data-driven assessment, based on the available datasets. It particularly emphasized the links between EO1 and EO6, which were considered for the preparation of the Benthic habitats chapter. It further provided information about analysis of pressures to the benthic habitats and in this context, it pointed out the pilot assessment of benthic habitats in the Adriatic Sea, which is the approach that could be replicated for other parts of the Mediterranean. It concluded that all habitats are under certain pressures, ranging from physical disturbance, fishing to Non-Indigenous Species (NIS).

18. Representatives of two Contracting Parties stressed the gaps in knowledge concerning habitat distribution and extent in the Eastern Mediterranean and recommended to promote capacity building and assistance.

19. While acknowledging data challenges, representative of another Contracting Party recommended the use of the latest marine habitat maps and data for the Adriatic region, provided by the GEF Adriatic project, to enhance the pertinent parts of the upcoming document, as deemed suitable. She suggested to substitute the current habitat distribution maps in section 4.2.2 (EO1 habitats) of the document with more precise maps that were not produced through modelling. The meeting further advised the secretariat to explore comparable techniques for each sub-region and incorporate them wherever feasible in the assessment results.

20. The Meeting agreed that the conclusions section of the document should be developed for the consideration of the next meeting and in consultation with Online Working Group.

21. For a better consideration of these comments, the Secretariat asked the Contracting Parties to submit them in the written form, until 17 March 2023.

22. The Meeting conclusions and recommendations regarding this agenda item are presented in **Annex III** to this Report.

3.1.2. Marine mammals: Cetaceans

23. The Secretariat introduced and presented the document UNEP/MED WG.547/4 “2023 MED QSR: Cetaceans (EO1) Chapter”. The Secretariat pointed out the importance of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative project (ASI), as the first endeavour to collect in systematic way relevant data on cetaceans’ distribution, abundance and pressures at the Mediterranean Sea level, as well as the development of the guiding document to assess GES of cetaceans in the scope of the EcAp/IMAP process, prepared under coordination of SPA/RAC in 2021. It further noted that, as recommended in the aforementioned 2021 guiding document, the results of the ASI present baseline/reference values for CI3 and CI4, and accordingly, the Cetaceans Chapter for MED QSR 2023 brings for the first time these values. However, it was not possible yet to assess GES, due to lack of long-term data series. On the other hand, CI5 could not be assessed due to significant knowledge gap and lack of methodological guidance for the assessment (baseline/reference and threshold values). The only assessment of the state of cetaceans could be made based on the two IUCN Red List assessments on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area. The results of these assessments show that cetaceans in the Mediterranean are mostly not in a good state, apart from two widely distributed dolphin species.

24. The representative of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat expressed her satisfaction that the results of the ASI project represent the crucial set of information for the cetaceans GES assessment and informed

about the planned future survey (next ASI), which is the component of the Long-term monitoring programme, adopted at the ACCOBAMS MOP 8 (December 2022) by the Resolution 8.10. She recalled that the Secretariat would provide updates to the next CORMON meetings and that one of the activities relevant for GES assessment is the implementation of the EU-funded ABIOMMMED project, with the aim to improve GES assessment for cetaceans under the MSFD. Although this project is focused on the Mediterranean EU countries, one of its components also foresees the exchange of knowledge with the non-EU countries.

25. Representative of a Contracting Party questioned the adequacy of the baseline/reference values for CI3 and CI4 in the report, particularly due to knowledge gaps for the southern Mediterranean, and requested that this fact is better reflected in the report. This representative also pointed out the lack of data for CI5.

26. Representative of another Contracting Party reminded of the aerial surveys done in the Adriatic Sea in the scope of the IPA Adriatic NETCET project and asked for relevance of the acquired data for the MED QSR 2023 assessment.

27. Representatives of several Contracting Parties suggested additions to the presented overview of pressures, notably inclusion of mariculture, as part of agriculture, further elaboration of specificities regarding impacts of underwater noise, as well as accentuation of the driftnets issue, which poses a significant threat for dolphins, particularly in the Western Mediterranean.

28. Representative of IUCN informed about the upcoming publication of Red List assessment of marine mammals at the European level.

29. Following a proposal by the representative of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, the Meeting agreed that the chapter on cetaceans be reviewed by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee before its submission for the next meeting of the Integrated CORMON (June 2023).

30. For a better consideration of these comments, the Secretariat asked the Contracting Parties to submit them in the written form, until 17 March 2023.

31. The Meeting conclusions and recommendations regarding this agenda item are presented in **Annex III** to this Report.

3.1.3. Marine mammals: Mediterranean Monk Seal

32. The Secretariat introduced and presented the document UNEP/MED WG.547/5 “2023 MED QSR: Mediterranean monk Seal (EO1) Chapter”. The Secretariat stressed the issue of lack of data, which was the main obstacle for carrying out the GES assessment. It further explained that the main data source was published scientific literature. However, to gather all available data, specific questionnaires were sent to relevant Mediterranean monk seal experts, but so far with the lack of proper feedback. In this regard, it asked the countries for help in acquiring the information from experts. It further informed about the activities of the Monk Sea Alliance, as the new player in monk seal conservation in the Mediterranean. This Alliance plans implementation of at least 4 monk seal conservation projects in the next 3 years, which should acquire more knowledge about the state of monk seal populations in the Mediterranean.

33. The Meeting emphasized knowledge gap for the Eastern Mediterranean and recognized the lack of availability of data which limited the assessment of monk seal GES and recommended that the Secretariat further liaise with the contacted Mediterranean monk seal experts with the view of obtaining more data not later than the 17 March 2023.

34. For a better consideration of these comments, the Secretariat asked the Contracting Parties to submit them in the written form, until 17 March 2023.

35. The Meeting conclusions and recommendations regarding this agenda item are presented in Annex III to this Report.

3.1.4. Marine turtles

35. The Secretariat introduced and presented the document UNEP/MED WG.547/6 “2023 MED QSR: Marine Turtles (EO1) Chapter”. The Secretariat explained that data used in the report come from multiple sources, such as the - MAVA funded Marine Turtles Project and ASI project, since the latter also collected information on wide range of marine species, besides cetaceans as its main target. It emphasized that most marine turtles’ populations are increasing, particularly nesting populations, which are expanding in new areas. However, measuring population demographics (CI5) is still challenging.

36. Representative of a Contracting Party noted that the report is lacking quantification for some indicators, such as population abundance.

37. Representative of another Contracting Party apologized for not being able to send marine turtles data sooner and promised to facilitate exchange with relevant marine turtle experts.

38. Representative of several Contracting Parties commented on the rescue centers role to raise awareness of value and need to conserve marine turtles.

39. Representatives also pointed out the relevance of issue of climate change for marine turtles and recommended that this aspect is included in marine turtles monitoring protocols.

40. For a better consideration of these comments, the Secretariat thanked for the comments and asked the Contracting Parties to submit them in the written form, until 17 March 2023.

41. The Meeting conclusions and recommendations regarding this agenda item are presented in **Annex III** to this Report.

3.1.5. Sea birds

42. The Secretariat introduced and presented the document UNEP/MED WG.547/7 “2023 MED QSR: Marine Birds (EO1) Chapter”. It explained the methodological approach, notifying those consultations were made within working group on birds and other experts in acquiring and interpreting the data. It stressed that GES has been reach for many marine bird populations, but this conclusion is mostly based on qualitative assessments. Namely, available data quality still prevents a truly quantitative assessment.

43. The Meeting commended the approach used to prepare the report and approved the findings of the GES assessment.

44. For a better consideration of these comments, The Secretariat thanked for the comments and asked the Contracting Parties to submit them in the written form, until 17 March 2023.

45. The Meeting conclusions and recommendations regarding this agenda item are presented in **Annex III** to this Report.

General comments referring to all reports under EO1 Chapter

46. The Secretariat informed that despite the absence of the EC representatives at the meeting, they provided a list of comments for each Chapter, and these comments will be dealt with during revision of the reports.

47. The Secretariat further stressed the relevance of harmonizing monitoring protocols for species. In this regard, the information was given that the 7th meeting of the EcAP working group is asked to proceed working on such harmonization.

48. Representative of ACCOBAMS Secretariat expressed the availability to further discuss about harmonization of monitoring methods for cetaceans.

3.3. Chapter on EO2 – Non-Indigenous Species

49. The Secretariat introduced and presented the document UNEP/MED WG.547/8 “2023 MED QSR: Non-Indigenous Species (EO2) Chapter”. The Secretariat pointed out that the document provides first baseline values for NIS in the Mediterranean. The assessment was focused on two objectives: understanding the trends and impacts of NIS. The analysis of trends showed that introduction of new NIS varies in different subregions, but no reduction in new NIS introductions has been observed so far. Clear interpretation of trends is challenging, due to lack of long-term standardized monitoring. Due to this fact, it was not possible to assess trends in abundance. Furthermore, assessing impacts remains an issue due to weak evidence base.

50. Representative of a Contracting Party emphasized that the NIS issue is very relevant for the Eastern Mediterranean since most of such species are introduced through Suez canal. The representative further commented that the report gives a snapshot of the situation, but it is lacking information about measurable impacts.

51. Representative of another Contracting Party informed that there are more existing data on NIS, particularly for the area around Suez, but they are not easily accessible.

52. Representative of another Contracting Party welcomed the involvement of experts, notably on-line working group and the collaboration with JRC, in the assessment, but commented that the report still has some knowledge gaps and lacks key messages.

53. The Secretariat informed that the finalization of the NIS Chapter is still ongoing, which is the main reason for lacking key messages, but these will be available in the next version of the report.

54. For a better consideration of these comments, the Secretariat asked the Contracting Parties to submit them in the written form, until 17 March 2023.

55. The Meeting conclusions and recommendations regarding this agenda item are presented in **Annex III** to this Report.

3.3. Chapter on EO3 – Fisheries

56. The Chair referred to the development of the EO3 Chapter report, which could not be a subject to this CORMON meeting, due to reasons previously explained by SPA/RAC director (reference to Paragraph 12). He suggested that once the report is provided by the GFCM, it should be a subject of revision by the on-line working group.

57. The Meeting invited SPA/RAC to pursue liaising with the Secretariat of GFCM and circulate by email the draft chapter to the participants, if available in time, for review by a voluntary online working group before its submission to the integrated CORMON meeting in June 2023. To this aim, the meeting requested the Secretariat and the coordinator to communicate to GFCM Secretariat the need to share the final draft of the report as early as possible to allow its circulation to the CPs for review at national level.

Agenda Item 4: Development of IMAP EOs

Working Document	UNEP/MED WG.547/10
Information Document	UNEP/MED WG.547/Inf.4

4.1. Update regarding EO4

58. The Secretariat informed about ongoing work for future assessment of EO4 – Marine food webs. In this regard, SPA/RAC published a call for consultation to elaborate a desktop review on marine food web monitoring and assessment. The Secretariat invited the Meeting to assist with dissemination of the call, to acquire the best possible expert for this task.

4.2. Development of the EO6

59. The Secretariat presented the document UNEP/MED WG.547/10 “Development of the IMAP Ecological Objective 6 on sea-floor integrity under the Barcelona Convention”. The document includes proposals of GES descriptions, related targets and indicators for the EO6, as well as proposals regarding the broad benthic habitats, the sources of pressures to be considered in the determination of the GES regarding this EO and the linkages with the other EOs. It emphasized the complexity of EO6 and synergies with EO1, although EO1 focusses only on threatened habitats, while EO6 covers the entire seafloor. It further explained that this document is based on work done so far under other initiatives, notably EU – MSFD, HELCOM and OSPAR.

60. The Meeting expressed its appreciation for the presented proposal for the development of the EO 6, commended the high quality of the proposal and the links with other approaches and encouraged continuation of this work.

Agenda item 5: Monitoring and assessment elements for the IMAP common indicators (CI1 and CI2) on benthic habitats

Working Document	UNEP/MED WG.547/11
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61. The Secretariat presented the document UNEP/MED WG.547/11 “Monitoring and assessment elements for the IMAP common indicators (CI1 and CI2) on benthic habitats”. The presented document provides an analysis of the implementation status of two IMAP Common Indicators (CIs) related to benthic habitats (CI1 and CI2). It was prepared with the support of the Biodiversity Online Working Group (OWG). The focus was on 11 habitat types and results are not promising, since only 10% of monitoring programs are in place.

62. A representative of a Contracting Party stressed the importance of coherence of all presented documents on benthic habitats. A representative of another Contracting Party pointed out that some data for Eastern Mediterranean are missing.

64. The question was raised on whether the document could be extended to pelagic habitats. The Secretariat responded that this issue is still being discussed, but it will probably not be solved until preparation of the future MED QSR reports.

65. The Meeting considered the proposal as a basis to be enhanced and adapted through the online working group.

Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business

66. No other matters were raised for discussion.

Agenda Item 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

67. Under this Agenda Item, the participants were invited to review the draft Conclusions and Recommendations. The Meeting approved the Conclusions and Recommendations as slightly amended by the Meeting and contained in **Annex III** to the present report.

Agenda Item 8: Closure of the Meeting

68. Ms. Tatjana HEMA, MAP Coordinator commended the results of the Meeting and provided information on the next steps of the MED QSR 2023 development. She informed that during March altogether 4 CORMON meetings have been organized, as well as the IMAP Task Force meetings. After collection of comments, revision of reports prepared thus far, the MED QSR 2023 proposal will be compiled and presented to the integrated CORMON Meeting, which is planned end of June 2023.

69. Ms. HEMA also informed that at the next Barcelona Convention COP, to be held in December 2023 in Slovenia, the Parties will be asked to give UNEP/MAP a mandate to update and further develop IMAP.

70. She further reminded that UNEP/MAP is providing continuous support to countries and announced planned projects focusing on MPAs, EcAp, marine litter, which should be supported by the EU.

71. Finally, she stressed that, in the future, UNEP/MAP will put more emphasis on capacity building for different topics, such as monitoring and assessment.

72. Mr Khalil ATTIA, commended the spirit of cooperation fostered through the Barcelona Convention and thanked the participants for their active involvement and contribution to the Meeting.

73. After the expression of usual courtesies, the Chair declared the Meeting closed on Friday, 10 March 2023, at 12.00 p.m.

Annex I
List of Participants

List of participants/ Liste des participants

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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT -
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Annex II
Agenda of the Meeting

Agenda of the Meeting

- Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting**
- Agenda Item 2: Organizational Matters**
- Agenda Item 3:** 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MED QSR): Content on Biodiversity, Non-indigenous species and Fisheries Ecological Objectives (EOs)
- 3.1. 2023 MED QSR: Benthic Habitats (EO1) Chapter
 - 3.2. 2023 MED QSR: Cetaceans (EO1) Chapter
 - 3.3. 2023 MED QSR: Mediterranean Monk Seal (EO1) Chapter
 - 3.4. 2023 MED QSR: Marine Turtles (EO1) Chapter
 - 3.5. 2023 MED QSR: Marine Birds (EO1) Chapter
 - 3.6. 2023 MED QSR : Non-indigenous Species (EO2) Chapter
- Agenda Item 4: Development of IMAP EOs**
- 4.1. Update regarding the development of the IMAP Ecological Objective 4 on Marine food webs under the Barcelona Convention
 - 4.2. Development of the IMAP Ecological Objective 6 on sea-floor integrity under the Barcelona Convention
- Agenda item 5. Monitoring and assessment elements for the IMAP common indicators (CI1 and CI2) on benthic habitats**
- Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business**
- Agenda Item 7: Conclusions and Recommendations**
- Agenda Item 8: Closure of the Meeting**

Annex III
Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

1. The Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) of the United Nations Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan - Barcelona Convention (UNEP/MAP) organized the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) for Biodiversity and Fisheries (hereinafter referred to as “the Meeting”), on 09 and 10 March 2023 in Athens (Greece).

Participation

2. The following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention were represented at the Meeting: Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, and Tunisia.

3. The Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) and the Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) were represented by observers.

4. The Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan - Barcelona Convention Secretariat (UNEP/MAP) and the Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication (INFO/RAC) were represented at the Meeting.

5. SPA/RAC acted as the Secretariat of the Meeting.

Agenda item 2. Organizational matters

6. The Meeting agreed that the Rules of procedure for Meetings and Conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols (UNEP/IG.43/6, Annex XI) would apply *mutatis mutandis* to this Meeting.

7. The Meeting unanimously elected the following officers:

Chairperson: Mr. Moustafa FOUDA (Egypt)
1st Vice-chairperson: Ms. Milena BATAKOVIĆ (Montenegro)
2nd Vice-chairperson: Ms. Kamila HALICHE
(Algeria) Rapporteur: Mr. Leonardo TUNESI (Italy).

Agenda item 3. 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MED QSR): Content on Biodiversity, Non-indigenous species and Fisheries Ecological Objectives (EOs)

8. The Secretariat presented the working documents containing the proposals of the IMAP Biodiversity Cluster Chapters of the 2023 MED QSR". Following the review and discussion of the presented Working Documents the Meeting reached the following conclusions and recommendations:

General conclusions and recommendations

9. Commending the Secretariat for the quality of the presented working documents, the meeting acknowledged the challenge of data availability and agreed that the participants may provide additional data and information to the Secretariat no later than one week after the meeting (17 March 2023). {At the same time the secretariat is recommended to share with the participants of the meeting, the list of all maps/ sources integrated into assessment findings, in order to get CPs feedback, as appropriate including possible additional most recent data and sources of information.}

10. Participants recommended to convene the online working groups of biodiversity cluster, to ensure as appropriate the consultation of the final version of the MED QSR 2023 before submitting the documents to the integrated CORMON meeting considering the obligation of disseminating the final version of the document before the end of May 2023.

10 bis. In this context participants reiterated the need to undertake frequent consultations with Online Working Group of Biodiversity cluster for further development of IMAP and deliver IMAP related products.

EO1 – Biodiversity

3.1.2023 MED QSR: Benthic Habitats (EO1) Chapter

Reference documents: UNEP/MED WG. 547/Inf.3, UNEP/MED WG. 547/3

11. The Meeting stressed the gaps in knowledge concerning habitat distribution and extent in the Eastern Mediterranean and recommended to promote capacity building and assistance.

12. The recent maps and data on marine habitats available for the Adriatic region from the GEF Adriatic project should be used to improve the relevant sections of the next version of the document, as appropriate. The maps of habitat distribution presented in section 4.2.2 (EO1 habitats) of the document should be replaced by more accurate maps not generated by modelling. In this respect, the meeting recommended the secretariat to make sure that similar approaches are considered per sub region and used to the extent of possible for assessment findings.

13. The conclusions section of the document should be developed for the consideration of the next meeting and in consultation with Online Working Groups.

3.2.2023 MED QSR: Cetaceans (EO1) Chapter

Reference document: UNEP/MED WG.547/4

14. The Meeting noted with appreciation the amount of data from the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative that made the sub-chapter comprehensive. The meeting agreed to incorporate

supplementary information given by several participants such as the species assessment and the update of threats specially the use of illegal drift nets, as appropriate, in the next version.

15. The following a proposal by the representative of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, the meeting agreed that the chapter on cetaceans be reviewed by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee before its submission for the next meeting of the Integrated CORMON (June 2023).

16. Despite the high quality of the data it contains, this chapter cannot represent a baseline because of the remaining gaps in knowledge, in particular, regarding the demographic characteristics of populations. Annex III Conclusions and Recommendations

3.3.2023 MED QSR: Mediterranean Monk Seal (EO1) Chapter

Reference document: UNEP/MED WG. 547/5

17. The Meeting recognized the lack of availability of data which limited the assessment of Monk seal GES and recommended that the Secretariat further liaise with the contacted Mediterranean Monk Seal experts with the view of obtaining more data not later than the 17th of March 2023.

18. The meeting recommended that further details be given in the report concerning the methodology used for GES assessment and the definition of the baseline.

3.4.2023 MED QSR: Marine Turtles (EO1) Chapter

Reference document: UNEP/MED WG. 547/6

19. The Meeting noted that despite the important work undertaken for its development, the report is lacking quantification for some indicators (e.g., population abundance).

20. The Meeting recommended to harmonise the protocols to incorporate monitoring of the long-term impact of the climate change on marine turtle species which are subjects to GES assessment.

3.5.2023 MED QSR: Marine Birds (EO1) Chapter

Reference document: UNEP/MED WG.547/7

21. The Meeting commended the consultation made within the working group on birds and with relevant other experts/institutions and approved the findings of the GES assessment.

EO2 – Non-indigenous species

3.6.2023 MED QSR : Non-indigenous Species (EO2) Chapter

Reference document: UNEP/MED WG.547/8

22. The Meeting noted with appreciation the strong mobilization of experts of the online working group for the elaboration of the refined national and regional baseline with the collaboration with JRC. The Meeting commended the integration made with the benthic habitat documents.

23. It recommended, however, to provide further information and analysis concerning the impacts of NIS.

EO3 – Fisheries

24. The Meeting was informed by the Secretariat that the document on the EO3 assessment was not yet finalised by GFCM Secretariat and could not be therefore discussed at this Meeting.

25. The Meeting stressed the relevance of fisheries assessment for the 2023 MedQSR and invited SPA/RAC to pursue liaising with the Secretariat of GFCM and circulate by email the draft chapter to the participants, if available in time, for review by a voluntary online working group before its submission to the integrated CORMON meeting in June 2023. To this aim, the meeting requested the secretariat and the coordinator to communicate to GFCM the need to share the final draft of the report as early as possible to allow its circulation to the CPs for review at national level.

Agenda item 4. Development of IMAP EOs

4.1. Update regarding EO4

26. The meeting took note of the recent development about the Ecological objective 4 related to the marine food webs and the recent dissemination by the SPA/RAC of a call for consultation to elaborate a desktop review on marine food web monitoring and assessment.

4.2. Development of the EO6

Reference documents: UNEP/MED WG. 547/Inf.4, UNEP/MED WG.547/10

27. The Meeting expressed its appreciation for the proposal presented by the Secretariat for the development of the Ecological objective 6. It commended the high quality of the proposal and the links with other Operational objectives, pressures, and other related approaches.

Agenda item 5. Monitoring and assessment elements for the IMAP common indicators (CI1 and CI2) on benthic habitats

Reference document: UNEP/MED WG.547/11

28. Following the presentation by the Secretariat of document UNEP/MED WG.547/11, the meeting recommended to keep strong linkages with the previous documents discussed and in particular the proposal on the Ecological objective 6. The meeting considered the proposal as a basis to be enhanced and adapted through the online working group.

Agenda item 6. Any other business

29. No issues were raised under this agenda item