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and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols

Rome, Italy, 22-23 April 2020

Agenda Item 3: Progress Report for January-March 2020

Progress Report by the Secretariat on the Activities Carried Out for the Period January-March 2020

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I. Introduction

1. This report covers the activities and outputs carried out between January and March 2020. The Reports by the Secretariat on Specific Issues and on Financial and Administrative Issues are prepared as separate documents, namely UNEP/MED BUR.89/6 and UNEP/MED BUR.89/5 respectively. The complementing “*Progress Report by the Secretariat on the Implementation of COP 21 Decisions*”, is presented as document UNEP/MED BUR.89/4.

II. Main Activities/Outputs per Programme of Work (PoW) theme linked to specific outcome

II.1 Overarching Theme: GOVERNANCE

Strategic Outcome 1.1: Contracting Parties supported in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols, Regional Strategies and Action Plans

Governance meetings

2. The 39th meeting of the Executive Coordination Panel (ECP) took place in Naples, Italy (1 December 2019), on the eve of COP 21 (Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019), and the 40th meeting of the ECP, in Rome, Italy (30-31 January 2020). At the core of the agenda of the first meeting was the preparation of COP 21, while the second meeting focused on the implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget (PoW) for 2020-2021, and in particular for its first year, including the preparation of the UNEP/MAP 2022-2027 Medium-Term Strategy. It provided the opportunity for a strategic discussion on the priorities of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system for the biennium.

Ratification of Barcelona Convention and its Protocols by all Contracting Parties supported

3. The Depositary has confirmed that no new deposit of instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols has taken place since April 2019.

4. The Focal Point of Tunisia informed the Secretariat that in February 2020 the law of the ratification of the ICZM Protocol was approved by the Council of Ministers and submitted to the Tunisian Parliament.

Resource mobilization, project proposals recently approved or submitted

5. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) development and submission processes of the “Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing Environmental Security” have been concluded. The GEF CEO endorsed 6 out of 7 Child Projects executed by UNEP/MAP. These are Child Project 1.1 “Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hotspots and Measuring Progress to Impacts – GEF IS 9684”, Child Project 1.2 “Mediterranean Pollution Hot Spots Investment Project – GEF ID 9717, Child Project 2.1 “Mediterranean Coastal Zones: Water Security, Climate Resilience and Habitat Protection - GEF ID 9687”, Child Project 2.2 “Mediterranean Coastal Zones: Managing the Water-Energy-Food and Ecosystems Nexus - GEF ID 9685, SCCF Project “Enhancing Regional Climate Change Adaptation in the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas – GEF ID 9670, and Child Project 4.1 “Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Environment and Climate Regional Support Project – GEF ID 9686”. The endorsement of Child Project 3.1 “Management Support and Expansion of Marine Protected Areas in Libya – GEF ID 10158” is expected to arrive soon. This project mobilized approx. US\$ 37 M for the MAP systems, its partners and the GEF eligible countries in the Mediterranean. The Coordinating Unit is setting the legal framework for the use of the funds and their allocation to the activities. The kickoff meeting of the MedProgramme is expected to take place in the first semester of 2020.

6. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project “Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in the Adriatic Sea through Marine Spatial Planning” (GEF Adriatic), progressed consistently with the programme of work approved by Albania and Montenegro in the Project Steering Committee meetings. The Project mobilized approximately US\$ 2 M to support the integration of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) into the ICZM process and to enhance the monitoring efforts of Albania and Montenegro. A coordination meeting with the two countries, PAP/RAC, SPA/RAC and the Coordinating Unit was held on 9 February 2020 in Podgorica, Montenegro. The meeting set the steps to be taken for the organization of the third Project Steering Committee meeting and the final event to finalize the project by 31 December 2020. Moreover, the meeting took stock of the progresses made in the preparation of the national monitoring programmes for Montenegro and Albania, the monitoring campaigns organized in the two countries to contribute to the IMAP efforts and the development of the MSP national strategy of Montenegro.

7. The execution of the European Commission (EC)-funded Project “Towards an ecologically representative and efficiently managed network of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas” was finalized at the end of September 2019. The final project and financial reports were submitted to the European Commission in March 2020. The project, funded with approximately US\$ 3,4 M, successfully completed all the MPA related activities and reached all the objectives. An independent terminal evaluation of the project is ongoing to assess its impacts of the project on the region. The findings

of the evaluation will be shared over the first semester of 2020.

8. The EC-funded IMAP-MPA (4 million Euros) project execution is progressing well. Communication has been established with the beneficiary countries for the national activities and national focal points have been nominated for Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. Communication is also established since January 2020 with the beneficiary countries for the regional/capacity building activities (i.e. Jordan and Palestine), including for the nomination of the national focal points of the project which is still ongoing. A coordination meeting was organized in Athens, Greece, on 12-13 February 2020, during which the Coordinating Unit, MED POL, SPA/RAC, PAP/RAC and INFO/RAC: (i) reviewed the national monitoring programmes for IMAP EO1, EO2, EO5, EO9 and EO10, and came up with proposals for the selection of the relevant MPA and high-pressure monitoring sites for the needs of the project; and (ii) consulted and came up with proposal for the integrated monitoring of IMAP EO1, EO2, EO5, EO9 and EO10. The kick-off and first steering committee of the project was successfully organized in Tunis, Tunisia, on 10 March 2020, including an agreement on the annual project workplan and budget, as well as the identification of the executing phases for 2020.

9. Following the successful implementation of the Project “Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) principles and practices in the ENP South region - SEIS Support Mechanism” (2016-2019), the main project outputs have been achieved. The H2020 indicator set was developed; in-country processes for organizing sharing of data sets underlying the H2020 indicators were completed; the infrastructure for reporting offered by the EEA (‘Reportnet’) and UNEP (UNEP/MAP infoMAP platform, including the MED POL Infosystem) is more widely used; and indicator-based H2020 report and assessments are being finalized and will also contribute to the UfM political process (i.e. up-coming Blue Economy and Environment/Climate Change Ministerial Conferences). UNEP/MAP is presently following-up on final reporting of completed project activities with partner countries further to the closure of the Contribution Agreement with EEA in February 2020. The final project Steering Committee is planned to be convened in Brussels, Belgium, on 16-17 June 2020. This final event will be accompanied by a corresponding communication/visibility campaign and sustainable engagement with partner countries for continued cooperation in the future.

10. Following the successful completion in December 2019 of the EC-funded projects (a) “Mediterranean Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in Coherence with the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive” (EcAp MED II) and (b) Marine Litter MED, concept notes for follow-up projects entitled “Efficient Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach-based Integrated Monitoring and Assessment of the Mediterranean Sea and Coasts in synergy with the EU MSFD” (EcAp-MED III) and Marine Litter MED II, respectively, have been submitted to the European Commission. The Concept Notes of the proposals have been approved at the 8th Programme Steering Committee Meeting of the GPGC funding instrument under the EC-UNEP framework agreement in January 2020. Full project proposals are currently under development for submission in April 2020, and the expected project launch is in mid-2020. The EcAp-MED III project aims to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the results of the EcAp MED II project and support further implementation of Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP)-compatible monitoring, assessment and reporting in line with the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MED QSR) Roadmap milestones at national, sub-regional and regional level with a particular focus on southern Mediterranean countries (namely Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia). It will also strengthen IMAP data management through the expansion of the IMAP Info-System to all IMAP Common Indicators and support harmonized assessment and the delivery of a data-based 2023 2023 MED QSR. The Marine Litter MED II project will focus in expanding in terms of geographical scope and impact of the Marine Litter MED project, and in the implementation of successfully conducted pilots addressing key reduction and prevention measures, to further develop the IMAP candidate indicator 24. It also aims to enhance collaboration and cooperation with the Black Sea Commission and FAO/GFCM on issues pertinent to marine litter management.

11. Following a successful implementation of the Cooperation Agreement with the Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea Protection in the last biennium, a limited number of outputs, mainly related to the SPAMI twinning programme and the prevention/reduction of marine litter from sea-based activities, were completed in January 2020, as agreed by the Steering Committee. The final Steering Committee meeting is planned for April 2020, and it will review the final Progress and Financial Report. Communication/ dissemination activities for significant outputs delivered with support through the Cooperation Agreement are under consideration.

12. Proposals for the following projects have been prepared by Plan Bleu/RAC, taking into account the PoW for 2020-2021:

- A project proposal on “Scénarios d'avenir et transitions concrètes pour une Méditerranée durable à 2050” (Future scenarios and concrete transitions for a sustainable Mediterranean by 2050) was submitted to the

Foundation Prince Albert II of Monaco to support funding of MED 2050 roadmap Phase 2, as approved at COP 21, with a particular focus on the module on sustainability transitions: i.e. identifying priority investments, measures and practices in the short, medium and long terms, to foster a transition towards a more sustainable and inclusive Mediterranean at 2050. Transition themes under potential joint interest of Plan Bleu/RAC and Foundation Prince Albert II of Monaco include sustainable governance, water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus, and transition towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns. The project would support the regional MED 2050 initiative as well as focus on two areas on Northern and Southern shores (to help identify solutions for systemic transitions in a participatory and inclusive approach). The total budget requested from the Foundation Prince Albert II of Monaco is 225,000 Euros.

- Plan Bleu/RAC submitted to the Région Sud – Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (French local government) a project proposal on “Prospective méditerranéenne MED 2050 en Région SUD et participation au nouvel exercice de prospective du Plan Bleu à l’échelle du bassin méditerranéen” (MED 2050 - Mediterranean foresight in the Région Sud – Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur and participation in the Plan Bleu/RAC-piloted new foresight exercise at the scale of the Mediterranean basin) to support funding of MED 2050 roadmap Phase 2, as approved by COP 21, with particular focus on the module on trends: i.e. identifying structural long-term trends and possible disruptions that will be determining factors for the future of the Mediterranean basin. A particular focus is on coastal demography, waste, transport and coastal adaptation to climate change. The proposal will support (i) a local implementation of the first module of MED 2050 at the level of the Région Sud – Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur and (ii) 2050 foresight group work on the same module at the level of the entire Mediterranean basin, building on achievements made during the biennium 2018-2019. The total budget requested from the Région Sud – Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur is 80,000 Euros.
- A project proposal under development for funding by Agence Française de Développement (AFD). This project would follow-up on previous AFD support on Nature-Based-Solutions to adapt to climate change (lessons learned, bottlenecks and recommendations for scaling-up). It would also support further work on the Blue Economy with a focus on funding sustainability transitions, in relations with MED 2050 and sectors such as aquaculture and biodiversity protection. The budget requested would be 90,000 Euros.

13. Proposals for the second phase of the following projects have been prepared by SPA/RAC and communicated to MAVA Foundation, taking into account the PoW for 2020-2022:

- “Understanding Mediterranean multi-taxa” (or ‘Bycatch’) of vulnerable species and testing mitigation- a collaborative approach “: the proposed activities will support data collection related to the incidental catch (bycatch) of the vulnerable species with the aim of developing and testing bycatch mitigation measures in the beneficiary countries (Croatia, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey) that can be replicated at regional level. The project will provide additional support to elaborate the Post-2020 SAP/BIO and the new GFCM strategy on the sustainable management of natural resources. Project’ partners: SPA/RAC, GFCM, ACCOBAMS, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia (coordinator of the project), IUCN Med, MEDASSET and WWF MedPo). The total Budget requested from MAVA is 4 214 000 Euros from which 577 000 Euros to SPA/RAC.
- “Rebuilding Mediterranean fish biomass and recovering key habitats to benefit fisheries and local communities: a Mediterranean Partnership” : the aim of phase 2 of MedKeyHabitats Project is to support the concerned national authorities in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Turkey to: (i) update, develop or implement management plans for pilot MPAs to reduce the impact of fishing activities on marine key habitats; (ii) exchange experience through SPAMI Twinning Programme, national and international event participation; (iii) build national capacities in line with the Barcelona Convention’s IMAP; (iv) elaborate National Action Plans (NAPs) for the conservation of marine vegetation and coralligenous habitats; (v) Run a solid bottom-up process to identify priorities and actions for a stronger “Post-2020 SAP/BIO”. The total Budget requested from MAVA is 4 607692 Euros from which 1,006,400 Euros to SPA/RAC.
- “Conservation of marine turtles in the Mediterranean countries (Marine turtles) project: the second phase is aiming to: (i) ensure sustainability of the project through partnerships; (ii) increase knowledge to create a baseline for effective conservation strategies according to the EcAp- IMAP protocol and principle; (iii) secure long term buy-in for sea turtles’ conservation through the preparation and adoption of NAPs for the conservation of marine turtles in the concerned countries; (iv) scale-up site protection. SPA/RAC will continue strengthening good practices in Kuriat Islands (Tunisia) and scale up in new priority areas such

as the Tyre Nature reserve (Lebanon) and Sirte -Farwa (Libya) through promotion of awareness and ecotourism actions. The requested budget is around 300,000 Euros.

14. Together with the City of Split and the University of Split, PAP/RAC has joined a consortium of the European cities in the COASTPATH project proposal submitted to H2020. The project proposal focuses on building the resilience of European cities to the effects of climate change. The first (concept) phase of the call was closed in February and the second phase (full proposal development) is scheduled for summer 2020.

15. The following external funding from IMO's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP) amounting to 112,710 Euros were secured and transferred to REMPEC: 16,677 Euros for the Meeting of National Experts on the Post-2021 Mediterranean Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (San Ġwann, Malta, 6-7 October 2020); 25,978 Euros for the Regional Workshop to enhance Marine Oil and HNS regional cooperation in the Mediterranean (MEDEXPOL 2020) (Monaco, 27-29 October 2020); 38,862 Euros for the Sub-regional Workshop on the use of the RETOS™ for the assessment of the level of oil spill response planning and readiness management, (Tirana, Albania, 28-30 April 2020); 31,192 Euros for Regional Workshop on the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (Valletta, Malta, 2-4 June 2020). Furthermore, in the framework of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Junior Professional Officers (JPO), the JPO seconded by the People's Republic of China since April 2018 was extended for a third and last year until April 2021.

16. SCP/RAC submitted a project to the CBC-MED Strategic Call. The project is named: "STAND Up! Sustainable Textile Action for Networking and Development of circular economy business ventures in the Mediterranean". SCP/RAC is the leader of the consortium formed by entities from Spain, Italy, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. STAND Up! Successfully passed the first step of the selection process and final results are expected towards March 2020. The total budget of the project is 3,8M Euros.

17. SwitchMed II project partners (UNIDO, UNEP/ Economy Division and SCP/RAC) were invited to submit a project proposal in order to add a specific output on Blue Economy to the current SwitchMed II project. The total amount of this new output would be 2,5M Euros (financed by DG MARE). A proposal was prepared in consultation with the MAP Coordinating Unit, MED POL, Plan Bleu/RAC and SPA/RAC. It is expected to agree on the set of activities by April 2020 in order to start before the summer period.

18. SCP/RAC is partner of a project proposal submitted to the EU H2020 call on understanding the transition to a circular economy and its implications on the environment, economy and society. The project is named "JUST2CE - A Just Transition to the Circular Economy" and the proposal involves partners from Italy, Spain, UK, North and Sub-Saharan African Countries. The overall budget of the project is 3M Euros and final results of the selection process are expected towards July 2020.

19. SCP/RAC is also partner of a project proposal submitted to the Europe Aid call: Innovate Jordan, the project is named "Jordan SME Growth Factory: Connect to Innovate", the overall budget of the project is 6M Euros and results of the selection process are expected towards April 2020. Also, a proposal has been submitted to the Catalan Agency for Cooperation and Development (200k Euros) to extend the training of trainers programme for sustainable business development and decentralize the support for green business model development and incubation of green and circular businesses in Tunisia.

Other activities under Strategic Outcome 1.1

20. REMPEC initiated the preparation of the Regional Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (post 2021), through the establishment of a Brainstorming Group, the recruitment of consultants and the completion of logistical arrangements to host the Meeting of National Experts on the Post-2021 Mediterranean Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (San Ġwann, Malta, 6-7 October 2020).

21. In relation to PoW Activity 1.1.3.2, Plan Bleu/RAC continues work on regional tools, including possible guidelines on sustainable tourism with a particular focus on nautical activities, pleasure boating including cruises. Terms of Reference (ToRs) are under preparation and a workshop is being planned for mid-2020. Three requests for funding were prepared by Plan Bleu/RAC, two in relation to the MED 2050 and one related to MedECC phase 2. An additional request is also under preparation, in line with PoW Activity 1.1.4.1.

22. Based on a concept note on the mid-term evaluations of the MSSD and SCP Regional Action Plan, the Secretariat has launched the preparations of these two closely linked processes, in line with Activity 1.1.2.5.

23. Regarding the preparation of the Post-2020 SAP BIO the following actions took place: a Concept Note and a guidance document for the Post-2020 SAP BIO elaboration have been produced in consultation with the SPA/BD Focal Points has been launched; and recruitment of additional experts have been concluded to support SPA/RAC to deliver this

important mandate; the reactivation of the SAP BIO Advisory Committee, including a consultation with SPA/BD Focal Points on its updated composition, is ongoing; The process considers a strong national consultation process. To this aim ToRs for national experts who will conduct national consultation processes for the Post-2020 SAP BIO elaboration, in support of the SAP BIO National Correspondents, are being prepared.

Strategic Outcome 1.2: Contracting Parties supported in compliance with the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols, Regional Strategies and Action Plans

24. The online Barcelona Convention Reporting System (BCRS) has been maintained and updated by INFO/RAC, while further improvements are being discussed with the Coordinating Unit. At the same time, the Secretariat, in coordination with MAP components, has been conducting individual follow-up actions with those Contracting Parties with outstanding national implementation reports for the biennium 2016-2017, as well as for previous biennia, where relevant. More information is provided in the “*Report by the Secretariat on Specific Issues*” (document UNEP/MED BUR.89/6).

Strategic Outcome 1.3: Strengthening participation, engagement, synergies and complementarities among global and regional institutions

25. The UNEP/MAP Coordinator participated in the meeting of the EC – UNEP 8th ENRTP – GPGC Cooperation Agreements - Programme Steering Committee, to discuss the current and future joint projects and the programme of work; this was also an opportunity to hold bilateral meetings with European Union officials (Brussels, Belgium, 27-29 January 2020). Both concept notes of project proposals submitted by UNEP/MAP, EcAp-MED III and marine Litter MED II, were approved by the Steering Committee, while the bilateral meetings with the European Commission were an opportunity to discuss the implementation of COP 21 Decisions, to confirm the increasingly prominent role of the UNEP/MAP work in the Mediterranean Region, and to enhance coordinated action at the regional level.

26. Plan Bleu/RAC is preparing, with partners, four events in the context of the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020 (Marseille, France, 11-19 June 2020): on climate change/MedECC report, nature-based solutions, SoED 2019, and tools to protect biodiversity in touristic areas, including three events on a Mediterranean Stand in coordination with SPA/RAC, to highlight the Mediterranean specificity.

27. In consultation with IMO, REMPEC liaised with the global oil and gas industry trade association (IOGP) for the drafting of the required agreement related to a part-time secondment to REMPEC from the oil and gas industry to support the implementation of 2020-2021 activities related to offshore.

28. A progress report on the activities of REMPEC was prepared and published for MEPC 75 (London, UK, 30 March-3 April 2020). The 2019 achievements and the 2020-2021 Programme of Work of REMPEC were presented at the 16th Inter-Secretariat Meeting between Regional Agreement Secretariats, Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) (Brussels, Belgium, 5 February 2020), where synergies and follow-up actions were agreed upon.

29. MAP through SCP/RAC participated in the 1st Meeting of the Plastic Waste Partnership under the Basel Convention (Beau Vallon, Seychelles, 2-5 March 2020), providing visibility to the work of the MAP - Barcelona Convention system related to plastic waste in the framework of this global initiative. MAP expressed its interest to participate in three working groups namely on prevention, collection and transboundary movement of plastic waste.

Strategic Outcome 1.4: Knowledge and understanding of the state of the Mediterranean Sea and coast enhanced through mandated assessments for informed policy-making

30. Plan Bleu/RAC is preparing thematic products for outreach, building on the findings of the 2019 State of the Environment and Development Report (2019 SoED). Six themes have been preselected (maritime transport, emerging pollutions, demographic trends, inequalities, SDGs implementation status and trends, offshore activities). Thematic briefs on emerging pollution and on maritime transport are under finalization, in consultation MED POL and REMPEC.

31. Plan Bleu/RAC is progressing in the recruitment of a specialized dedicated expert for developing and implementing the second set of activities included in the Med 2050 Roadmap. The first foresight group meeting is planned for April 2020. The first “comité d’orientation” meeting is tentatively planned for June/July 2020. A consultation on trends and gaps is under preparation. Three publications on long term trends are under revision: (i) publication on demographic trends (200 pages) and terms of reference for drafting a summary have been disseminated; (ii) a publication comparing projected trends in the 2005 report and actual trends is under review for publication; (iii) a dashboard of long-term trends is under review and finalization for publication. The first edition of the MED 2050 newsletter is under preparation, to be disseminated through the MED 2050 network in the first semester 2020.

32. Plan Bleu/RAC has initiated preparations to produce in 2021 an updated populated version of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard for monitoring the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016–2025. The 2019 dashboard is ready for dissemination in English and French.
33. Regarding the Exchange of best practices on data and indicators among National Observatories and observation networks (in synergy with the MSSD dashboard, IMAP indicators, and Shared Environmental Information System - SEIS) and the update of the Regional Observatory, Plan Bleu/RAC is in preparation of a concept note for a workshop on monitoring SDG 14, to be held in October 2020 (scope extended to SDGs 13 and 15 to be confirmed).
34. Plan Bleu/RAC supports the Science-Policy practice events (two events on Blue Economy, in Marseille, France, 4-6 February 2020, and in Montpellier, France, 4-5 February 2020, as well as an event on Sustainable Tourism, in Salou, Spain, 2-4 March 2020). The capitalization strategy and methodological tool for assessing mainstreaming and transfer potential are under development and testing.
35. The draft Assessment Report on the Current State and Risks of Climate and Environmental Changes in the Mediterranean is under finalization. A consultation is being organized between the Coordinating Unit, the MedECC Coordinators and scientific secretariat, and the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat. Funding sources for continuing MedECC activities are under identification; to this end an application to the H2020 research funding has been submitted (on the climate change impact on the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus).
36. To promote educational programmes in cooperation with academic institutions focusing on marine and coastal issues, with the aim to promote education on sustainable development, Plan Bleu/RAC, submitted together with a policy science research institution a joint PhD thesis project proposal for funding (the thesis is focusing on the MED 2050 foresight study). Two additional part-time partnerships with PhD students are under discussion (on Blue Economy / aquaculture and on coastal observation), with direct contribution to the 2020-2021 PoW.
37. A meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Task Force (Athens, Greece, 11-12 February 2020) including the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit, MED POL, SPA/RAC, PAP/RAC and INFO/RAC discussed practical ways forward for the implementation of specific activities of the 2023 MED QSR preparation through ongoing and planned projects, and through activities planned as part of the Programme of Work for 2020-2021.
38. The UNEP/MAP Secretariat co-organized and attended the Regional Workshop for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 “The Mediterranean Sea We Need for the Future We Want” (Venice, Italy, 21-23 January 2020). The workshop, co-organized by the Italian Oceanographic Commission (COI), Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO/IOC), European Commission, UNEP/MAP and the Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM), in collaboration with the BlueMed Initiative, brought together over 150 academic, governmental and research institutions, as well as regional and international organizations and private sector organizations engaging in ocean science and policy. The aim was to map and identify key regional issues, science questions and responses of relevance for the Mediterranean region to support the development of the Implementation Plan of UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030. It provided an opportunity to identify ongoing ocean science initiatives and stakeholders which could support the work of UNEP/MAP in addressing key knowledge gaps regarding the state of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast, and the implementation of IMAP.
39. In consultation with the Secretariat of the MAP - Barcelona Convention System, REMPEC invited HELCOM, ODYSSEA Project and SPA/RAC to share information on data and projects related to the granting of exemption under the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM Convention), to target species in the Mediterranean Sea and enhance its relationship with BWM Convention at the REMPEC's Regional Workshop on the BWM Convention (Valletta, Malta, 2-4 June 2020).
40. INFO/RAC is collecting and uploading REMPEC material in preparation of a training module to be uploaded on the E-learning platform.

Strategic Outcome 1.5: MAP knowledge and MAP information system enhanced and accessible for policy-making, increased awareness and understanding

41. Several activities have been initiated by SPA/RAC during this period: a concept note on the governance and updating of the Marine Mediterranean Invasive Alien Species Database (MAMIAS) is under preparation; the elaboration of a new version of MAMIAS web Application has been launched; the SPAMI platform web application has been developed and published online; a call for Tenders to develop new web applications for the Standard Data-Entry form (SDF) and SPA directory has been prepared and disseminated; a call for Tenders for the improvement of the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform was prepared and disseminated; the preparation of terms of reference for designing the online SPAMI Evaluation System has been launched. Furthermore, INFO/RAC has started the process for the

development of Data Standards and Data Dictionaries on Biodiversity cluster.

42. The Plan Bleu/RAC website and communication formats are being modernized. REMPEC launched its new REMPEC.2.0 website, the revamped Waste Management Decision Support Tool and the Mediterranean Network of Law Enforcement Officials relating to MARPOL within the framework of the Barcelona Convention's (MENELAS) websites, hosted on INFO/RAC's server together with the Preparedness for Oil-polluted Shoreline clean-up and Oiled Wildlife interventions' (POSOW) and Mediterranean Integrated Geographical Information System on Marine Pollution Risk Assessment and Response (MEDGIS-MAR) websites, which were transferred in 2019.

Strategic Outcome 1.6: Raised awareness and outreach

43. A 2020 Planning Exercise was conducted to identify the main Strategic Issues for the current biennium with emphasis in its first year. All MAP components and all staff of the Coordinating Unit provided inputs to this exercise. The Coordinating Unit organized a retreat for all its staff under the title "Connect, communicate, collaborate: realizing the full potential of the MAP Team" (Nafplion, Greece, 18-19 February 2020). An action plan was developed in the retreat, which will be followed-up and reviewed accordingly. A team building event for the SPA/RAC staff has also been organized to enhance internal communication in SPA/RAC.

44. The "2019 State of the Environment and Development Report (SoED 2019)— key messages and summary for decision makers" was submitted to the UNEP Publishing Board; the publication was cleared by the Chief Scientist and reviewed by the Gender Advisor and is due to be formally considered at the Publishing Secretariat meeting scheduled in the second half of March 2020. The full 2019 SoED Report will be submitted to the Publishing Board through the same procedure as soon as the final text is provided by Plan Bleu/RAC. The goal is to obtain the approval of the UNEP Publishing Secretariat and the ISBN in time for the publication's launch scheduled in June 2020, and dissemination at major international events, including the IUCN World Conservation Congress and the 2020 UN Ocean Conference.

45. Launched in October 2019 with the hashtag #BarcelonaConvention, the UNEP/MAP twitter account is boosting the visibility of the MAP—Barcelona Convention system on an important social media platform on which most institutional actors of environmental governance in the Mediterranean region are present.

46. The COP 21 Website is being maintained and updated by INFO/RAC. The MED Newsletter 01/20 was produced and disseminated.

47. The Coordinating Unit is working with INFO/RAC on the implementation of the Operational Communication Strategy. Regular meetings of the MAP Communication taskforce are held with the participation of communication specialists in the RACs. An action plan assorted with a timetable is being devised with inputs from MAP components and in line with the operational priorities set forth in the PoW.

48. Plan Bleu/RAC also prepares, with partners, four events in the context of IUCN 2020 (on climate change/MedECC report, nature-based solutions, SoED 2019, and tools to protect biodiversity in touristic areas), including three events on a Mediterranean Stand in coordination with SPA/RAC, to highlight Mediterranean specificity.

49. The Plan Bleu/RAC's Blue Economy report on perspectives and lessons learned based on 40 case studies was published in January 2020 and presented at a number of events on Blue Economy. Ten additional publications are expected to be published and disseminated in 2020.

50. PAP/RAC participated at the meeting of the European and Mediterranean Coastal Agencies - EMCA 2020 (Budva, Montenegro, 12-13 February 2020), organized by the French Conservatoire du littoral and the Public Enterprise for Coastal Zone Management of Montenegro. This was the second meeting of the network of Agencies established in 2015 during the Coast Day celebration in Antibes, this time dedicated to exchanging the experiences with adaptation to climate change, starting from the national strategies for coastal adaptation through different projects, approaches, practices and solutions. The meeting was attended by representatives of the institutions dealing with coastal management from Albania, Algeria, France, Italy, Montenegro, Morocco, Senegal, Spain, Tunisia and the UK, and provided an opportunity to present UNEP/MAP and PAP/RAC initiatives in the field and to present the first coastal plan prepared with this objective, i.e. the Coastal Plan for the Šibenik-Knin County in Croatia. Good media coverage ensured by the Montenegro organisers was an opportunity to promote the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system and its efforts and achievements in an interview of the PAP/RAC Director to the Montenegro TV.

51. A TV piece focused on coastal flooding, and how coastal cities adapt to it, was filmed on 6 March 2020 and aired on 10 March 2020 on the Croatian RTL TV station as a part of the daily news show. The journalist was particularly interested in the ADRADAPT project (of which PAP/RAC is a partner) and some previous PAP/RAC activities, such as the assessment of costs of sea level rise in Croatia, carried out within the MedPartnership project.

52. The Identification Guide on vulnerable species accidentally caught in the Mediterranean Sea is being translated into Arabic, and printed in English and French within the MedBycatch project. A film screening and a roundtable to raise awareness on the bycatch issue is being organized in Tunisia, within the MedBycatch project, in partnership with the Environmental Film Festival (EnviroFest, 14-20 March 2020).

53. SCP/RAC disseminated two new publications: (a) Guidelines to address single-use plastics through public procurement in the Mediterranean (developed in the framework of the cooperation agreement with IMELS) <http://www.cprac.org/es/archivo-de-noticias/genericas/addressing-plastic-pollution-through-public-procurement-new-guidelines>, and (b) Guidelines to phase out single-use plastic bags in the Mediterranean (adopted at COP 21) <http://www.cprac.org/es/archivo-de-noticias/genericas/guidelines-to-phase-out-single-use-plastic-bags-in-the-mediterranean-a>.

54. The agreement has been made with the Ministry of Environment, Climate Action and Development Planning of Malta to organize the 2020 edition of the Mediterranean Coast Day in Malta. Discussions on the exact venue and programme of the event are ongoing.

55. REMPEC initiated consultations with SPA/RAC for the production of an animated video, from which illustrations will be used to prepare promotional material. REMPEC also follows-up with INFO/RAC to update and produce a banner based on COP 21.

II. 2 Core Theme I: LAND AND SEA-BASED POLLUTION

Strategic Outcome 2.1: Strengthening regional implementation of the obligations under the Barcelona Convention and four pollution-related Protocols, and of programmes of measures in existing relevant Regional Strategies and Action Plans

56. Further to the preparation of the “Evaluation report on the implementation of the Regional Plans for reduction of BOD5 from Urban Wastewater and in the Food Sector; Reduction of Inputs of Mercury; Elimination of POPs; and Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean”, reflecting the status of implementation of legally binding measures in the aforementioned Regional Plans for the biennium 2018-2019, a final evaluation of the implementation of targeted measures by the Contracting Parties (by 2021) is currently underway. Best practices on implementation of the legally binding measures will be presented as part of the “Meeting on Best Practices on Municipal Wastewater, Sludge Reduction and Stormwater-related Waste Prevention”, planned to be convened by end of 2020.

57. REMPEC renewed its agreements with FEDERCHIMICA and Sea Alarm, within the Mediterranean Assistance Unit (MAU).

58. REMPEC followed up on the conclusions and recommendations from the 3rd MENELAS meeting pertaining to the work of the MENELAS Working Group. The Chair of MENELAS was invited to represent the network at the Seminar on Maritime Environmental Crimes – Publicity of investigations and convictions, and the Meeting of the North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors (NSN) (Brussels, Belgium, 28-30 April 2020).

59. SCP/RAC prepared ToRs for the organization of a regional activity on phasing-out Single-Use Plastic (SUP) items. The activity will include a regional training for southern Mediterranean countries, Balkans and Turkey. It will be organized in June 2020 in Barcelona, Spain, and will support the process of preparation of Policy Guidelines to phase-out Single Use Plastic items in the Mediterranean.

Strategic Outcome 2.2: Development or update of new/existing action plans, programmes and measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines

60. Following Decision IG.24/10 regarding updating the annexes of the Land Based Sources (LBS) and Dumping Protocols, preparations were initiated for identification of main elements and deliverables of the work. These are based on the work presented in Document UNEP/MED WG.473/5/Rev.1, entitled: “Proposals for updating the Annexes of the Land Based Sources, Hazardous Waste and Dumping Protocols”. Work has been launched to prepare the annexes of LBS and Dumping Protocols with annotations, to be discussed in experts’ meetings planned in the fourth and first quarters of 2020 and 2021, respectively. The deliverables will be in convergence with the PoW Activity 2.5.1.2 on developing techniques for monitoring of dumping activities and compliance monitoring of permitting conditions.

61. MED POL initiated preparations for updating the National Baseline Budget (NBB) Guidelines (2nd Quarter of 2020), preparing data dictionaries for reporting for each group of pollutants, and rendering a list of Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) procedures for the national and regional levels. The Guidelines will build up upon lesson learned from the 4th Cycle of NBB update (to which 10 Contracting Parties reported) and include the monitoring of non-point sources (i.e. diffuse sources) as well as aquaculture.

62. An in-house exercise is ongoing of developing and testing a methodology for the countries using the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (E-PRTR) to report to next cycles of Barcelona Convention Reporting System (BCRS under LBS Protocol) and NBB. Preparation of guidance on reporting complementarities of E-PRTR data to NBB is initiated via voluntary exercises with national E-PRTR authorities of Spain (confirmed), France (confirmed) and Italy (tbc). This exercise will be upscaled to the countries at regional level when the testing is finalized.

63. Work has started on the preparation of the new Regional Plans on urban wastewater treatment plans, sewage sludge management, and management of marine litter in the Mediterranean. The process for nomination of the experts for the working groups, as per Decision IG.24/10, is under way and the meetings for discussion of draft versions of the new Regional Plans with the working groups are planned for the last quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021.

64. Within the framework of the Project “Western Mediterranean Region Marine Oil and HNS Pollution Cooperation” (West MOPoCo): a) The initial draft Inter-regional HNS response was submitted to the HELCOM Response Group (Vejle, Denmark, 26-28 February 2020) for its consideration, b) the manual and tool to evaluate oil spill management capabilities introduced in 2019 have been used by Algeria, Morocco, Spain and Tunisia during the period under review (completing the assessment carried out by France, Italy and Malta in 2019), and c) the guidance document for the development of national mechanism for the mobilization of response equipment and experts has been finalized and disseminated to the beneficiary countries for the preparation of their national assessment. REMPEC launched a consultation process through the Mediterranean Technical Working Group on possible options to set-up a Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean.

65. SCP/RAC drafted a concept note for the preparation of Policy Guidelines to phase-out single use plastic items. The preparatory phase will include a step aiming at collecting on-the-ground information to gain knowledge on the situation regarding SUP in three selected Mediterranean countries. This research will allow for assessing the potential impact of different policy options on selected SUP items. The work will be carried out with the support of one international and three national experts.

Strategic Outcome 2.3: Strengthening and implementation of marine pollution prevention and control legislation and policies at national level, including through enforcement and integration into sectorial processes

66. A methodology for the midterm evaluation of the NAPs is under preparation (PoW activity 2.1.1.1). The mid-term evaluation will be guided by specific pending unaddressed gaps and focus on streamlining NAP measures in the national regulatory systems and their implementation. The work is foreseen to commence in early 4th quarter of 2020.

67. SCP/RAC organized bilateral meetings in Egypt to follow-up the progress regarding the national initiative to phase out single use plastic bags (Cairo, Egypt, 24-26 February 2020). SCP/RAC provided initial support to Tunisia for the development of a communication strategy following the publication of the decree to ban single use plastic bags. The support was requested by Tunisia; further activities will be implemented after the kick-off of Marine Litter Med II.

68. SCP/RAC participated to the coordination meeting for the Child Project 1.1 of the MedProgramme (London, UK, 27-28 February 2020) and prepared a detailed work plan of activities regarding new POPs and Mercury (including legal support to Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia).

Strategic Outcome 2.4: Marine Pollution Monitoring and Assessment

69. Work is in progress for operationalization of the means of implementations aimed at supporting implementation of the national IMAPs, preparation of the data dictionaries related to the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria Common Indicators 18 and 20, as well as application of the QAs and QC schemes into the IMAP Info System

70. The process is under finalization for the Agreement of UNEP/MAP with the Marine Environment Studies Laboratory of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the biennium 2020-2021, in order to continue supporting harmonized and coordinated quality assurance programmes at national level, as well as preparing the protocols for applying good laboratory practices related to eutrophication and contaminants. The activities include further work to ensure an update/development of the scales of monitoring and assessment, as well as assessment criteria and products.

71. In line with PoW activity 2.4.1.4, work is ongoing to identify the needs for improvement of the assessment methodologies to address integrated Good Environmental Status (GES) assessment, including practical use of modelling and remote techniques. These activities are also aimed at supporting countries in the implementation of IMAP.

72. Work has started to prepare a regional assessment of status and impacts of nutrients coming from agriculture and aquaculture. These two assessments will be complementing the state of play for the preparation of two out of six new

regional plans, namely the Regional Plan on Agriculture and the Regional Plan on Aquaculture, to be prepared in the next biennium. These two assessments are also linked to PoW activity 2.2.1.2. (updating NBB methodology) where monitoring and reporting related issues will be defined aiming to streamline the monitoring of the implementation of the Regional Plans on Agriculture and Aquaculture (PoW Activities 2.4.3.1 and 2.5.1.1).

73. REMPEC, in consultation with Plan Bleu/RAC, initiated the drafting of the ToRs for the preparation of the Study on Marine Pollution from Ships and Maritime Traffic trends in the Mediterranean.

Strategic Outcome 2.5: Enhanced capacity at regional, sub-regional and national levels including assistance and capacity building

74. Work is in progress in coordination with the London Protocol/ London Convention (LP/LC) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for further reinforcing and developing techniques for the monitoring of dumping activities and for the compliance monitoring of permitting conditions, as well as the identification of capacity building and technical assistance to Contracting Parties (to be launched in spring 2020). This work will be in line with PoW Activity 2.2.1.1 on updating the annexes of Dumping Protocol. The deliverables will contribute in the technical aspect of the annexes pertaining the monitoring and reporting of the dumping activities.

75. Work is currently under way for expanding the pilots on Fishing for Litter (FfL) and Adopt a Beach and other marine litter removal/reduction and prevention SCP pilot projects - particularly focusing on plastics and microplastics - to be coordinated with the implementation of the Marine Litter MED II Project activities.

76. Work is in progress for launching pilot projects on Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB) and new POPs and mercury reduction and prevention and site decontamination based on updated NAP hotspots/ sensitive areas to be implemented in the framework of MedProgramme, Project Child 1.1 (project funds not allocated to UNEP/MAP yet). Furthermore, means of implementation are defined to support realization of Coastal Area Management Programme (CAMP) Bosnia and Herzegovina through implementation of national IMAP Pollution related Cluster.

77. REMPEC finalized logistical arrangements, and recruited the team of consultants for the Sub-Regional Workshop on the use of the RETOS™ for the assessment of the level of oil spill response planning and readiness management (Tirana, Albania, 28-30 April 2020). However, the meeting was postponed to a later date due to the current outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Albania. REMPEC and the Coordinator of the West MOPoCo Project submitted an official request to the Government of Monaco, through the RAMOGE Secretariat, to host the Regional Workshop to enhance Marine Oil and HNS regional cooperation in the Mediterranean (MEDEXPOL 2020) (Monaco, 27-29 October 2020).

78. SCP/RAC organized a Plastic Hackathon event (Cairo, Egypt, 25 February 2020), as closing event of the #BagToTheFuture business challenge organized in Egypt, that supported two business initiatives. Videos on the two winners of the challenge are being finalized. SCP/RAC also drafted ToRs for the development of a training activity to support the green entrepreneurship ecosystem in Algeria.

79. SCP/RAC is coordinating with the “Circular Economy hotspot – Catalonia” event organizers to facilitate the participation of representatives from Mediterranean countries in the event (Barcelona, Spain, 16-19 November 2020). The event will be an opportunity to showcase concrete examples of implementation of Circular Economy.

80. SCP/RAC prepared ToRs for a pilot action to test deposit refund systems for PET bottles in Morocco and also prepared a detailed work plan of activities regarding the prevention of new POPS and Mercury in Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. The latter was linked to the coordination meeting for the Child Project 1.1 of the MedProgramme, which took place in London, UK, on 27-28 February 2020).

81. Work is in the final preparatory phases for initiation of implementation of Child Project 1.1 (GEF ID 9684) “Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hotspots and Measuring Progress to Impacts”. Upon completion, the project aims to dispose of 2000 tons of POPs; safe storage of 50 tons of mercury wastes, and to demonstrate the practical replacement of mercury and new POPs through adoption of environmentally sound alternatives in Mediterranean countries. The project is targeting 10 countries: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Montenegro, Tunisia and Turkey. During Phase 1 of this project, which will be completed in the biennium 2020-2021, POPs will be collected from Lebanon and Algeria to be disposed in an environmentally safe manner. Work will be also initiated by the end of this biennium to dispose of Mercury wastes. Reduction of new POPs and Mercury and alternative pilot activities will run in parallel with work planned for disposal of POPs and Mercury wastes. This work is in line with PoW Activity 2.5.2.2 and 2.5.2.3 for the 2020-2021 biennium, on launching pilot projects on PCB/new POPs and mercury reduction and prevention and site decontamination based on updated NAP hotspots/ sensitive areas.

Strategic Outcome 2.6: Enhanced cooperation at regional, sub-regional and national levels to prevent and control marine pollution

82. SCP/RAC is proceeding according to the timeline for the Green Business Award indicated in Decision IG 24/3 of COP 21 (Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019). The benchmarking of other relevant awards was completed, and a brainstorming session was organized with SCP/RAC staff to further define the concept of the award, the categories and the criteria for the selection. Legal arrangements are also under preparation. The award will be launched during the next edition of the SwitchMed connect event to take place during ECOMONDO (Rimini, Italy, 3-6 November 2020).

Strategic Outcome 2.7: Identifying and tackling new and emerging issues, as appropriate

83. For the implementation of Decision IG.24/8 on the road map for the possible designation of the Med SOX ECA, REMPEC, MED POL and Plan Bleu/RAC launched a joint Call for Expressions of Interest to provide consultancy services and drafted five ToRs related to the: IMO submission and synopsis of the assessment (ToR 1); Quantification of the impacts associated with deposition of PM2.5 and air toxics (ToR 2); Land-based emissions controls (ToR 3); Additional economic impact evaluation (ToR 4); and, Fuel supply and technology (ToR 5), to be submitted to the SOX ECA(s) Technical Committee of Experts, for its consideration prior to the launch of the related tenders scheduled in April 2020.

84. An ad-hoc inter-ministerial meeting attended by the Coordinating Unit and REMPEC was held with the Tunisian competent authorities (Tunis, Tunisia, 11 March 2020) to address Decision IG.24/8. REMPEC was to organize a National Workshop on Ratification and Effective Implementation of Annex VI to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) for Lebanon (Beirut, Lebanon, 17-18 March 2020) but this was postponed to a later date due to the current outbreak of the coronavirus disease. Similar events will be organized in Algeria and Egypt, subject to the confirmation of the dates and venues by the relevant competent authorities.

85. SCP/RAC reviewed the draft option paper on enabling a circular economy for plastics and lowering the impact on environment and health (with UNEP Chemicals and Health Unit). SCP/RAC also made the final review of the report on "Inspiring business practices and collaborative initiatives to prevent plastic packaging waste in the food and beverage industry and ultimately combat marine plastic pollution". The report will be disseminated very shortly.

II.3 Core Theme II: BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS

Strategic Outcome 3.1: Strengthening regional implementation of the obligations under the Barcelona Convention, and its relevant Protocols and other instruments

86. A consultation is conducted with the SPA/BD Focal Points on the approach chosen for the establishment and functioning of the Ad hoc Group of Experts on Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) for the next period. They have been requested to propose potential independent experts (and their CVs) to become members of AGEM. A list of qualified experts in each AGEM area of expertise is compiled and an online poll will be organized among the SPA/BD Focal Points. Relevant partner organizations members of AGEM are also requesting to appoint their scientific body representative in the AGEM.

87. The 2020 Forum of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean is a joint initiative of MedPAN and SPA/RAC. The 2020 MPA Forum is co-organized by SPA/RAC, MedPAN, WWF and the host country. It will take place on 30 November - 2 December 2020 in Monaco. The first meeting of the forum steering committee took place in Marseille, on 6-7 February 2020. The meeting discussed the forum organization process, themes, format, venue, logistics and budget. A save-the-date and a call of expression of interest for participation was circulated in March.

Strategic Outcome 3.2: Development of new action plans, programmes and measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines for the conservation of Coastal and Marine biodiversity and ecosystems

88. A concept note on the elaboration of a post-2020 strategic document on marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures in the Mediterranean has been elaborated and is under consultation within the Secretariat. Furthermore, draft terms of reference for the hiring of a consultant to support SPA/RAC in the preparation of the post-2020 strategic document are prepared and shared with SPA/BD Focal Points. Based on their feedback, an open call for consultancy services will be launched.

89. The Updated Classification of Benthic Marine Habitat Types for the Mediterranean Region was transmitted by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat to European Environment Agency (EEA) to be included in the European Nature Information System (EUNIS). Furthermore, the SDF document has been updated with the newly updated Reference List of Marine Habitat Types for the Selection of Sites to be Included in the National Inventories of Natural Sites of Conservation

Interest in the Mediterranean, and was sent to the SPA/BD Focal Points.

90. ToRs for (a) the assessment and the updating of the Regional Action Plan concerning dark habitats, and (b) for the identification of the First elements for the elaboration of the list of Reference of Pelagic Habitat Types in the Mediterranean Sea, are under preparation. Furthermore, the preparation of the ToRs for the elaboration of the "Interpretation Manual" of the new reference list of marine benthic habitats types in the Mediterranean is under way.

91. Within the MedBycatch Project an identification Guide of the vulnerable species incidentally caught in the Mediterranean fisheries has been elaborated and published (English/French/Spanish) by IUCN Med, SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, GFCM, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia and MEDASSET. SPA/RAC has started translating the guide to Arabic. Within the same project, SPA/RAC is supporting the bycatch data collection and analysis in Tunisia and participates in the 2nd Scientific committee meeting of the MedBycatch project (10 March 2020 - teleconference).

92. The "manual on standardized monitoring data collection on incidental catch of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea" is published by GFCM. The document was elaborated with contributions from SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, IUCN Med and MEDASSET. within the MedBycatch Project. The preparation of the French version is ongoing.

93. Within the MedBycatch Project, SPA/RAC made a contract with the INSTM (National Institute of Marine Science and Technology, Tunisia) to elaborate and test a modified fishing gear which mitigates the incidental catch of vulnerable species.

Strategic Outcome 3.3: Strengthening national implementation of biodiversity conservation policies, strategies and legislation measures

94. The SPA/BD Focal Point of Israel has been contacted in order to start the preparation of the elaboration of NAP on Non-Indigenous Species (NIS), with SPA/RAC assistance.

95. NAPs for the conservation of marine turtles have been elaborated for Libya, Lebanon and Spain and are under discussing and approval at national level. Within the framework of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, SPA/RAC is supporting a student internship at La Rochelle University (France) to analyze the field data collected in the territorial waters of Tunisia about the marine megafauna distribution.

96. SPA/RAC will support the elaboration of the management and business plans of (i) Tyre Coast Nature Reserve in Lebanon, (ii) Gulf of Sirte in Libya, and (iii) Rachgoun area in Algeria. These activities will be implemented through the IMAP-MPA EU-funded project. Since the signature of the PCA between SPA/RAC and UNEP on 27 January 2020, SPA/RAC started preparing the detailed national activities and workplan which have been discussed at the Project Coordination Meeting, held in Athens, Greece, on 12-13 February 2020. The coordination meeting served also to discuss and agree on a detailed agenda and potential documents to be prepared for the kick-off and first Steering Committee meeting of the project (Tunis, Tunisia, 10 March 2020).

Strategic Outcome 3.4: Monitoring, inventory and assessment of biodiversity with focus on endangered and threatened species, non-indigenous species and key habitats

97. The collection of NIS data from the southern Mediterranean countries is ongoing and the roadmap for the elaboration of NIS baseline condition and status will be prepared once data collection is completed.

98. SPA/RAC will organize two CorMon meetings to strengthen technical support that countries might need to successfully implement the second phase of the IMAP implementation and deliver, at least, one set of quality assured data useful for the 2023 MED QSR.

99. In the framework of the GEF Adriatic Project, a Marine survey study related to Patok-Rodoni Bay (Albania) has started. Furthermore, in the same framework, a Capacity-building meeting on reporting monitoring data into the IMAP (Pilot) Info system was organized by PAP/RAC in coordination with the Coordinating Unit, SPA/RAC and Info/RAC (Podgorica, Montenegro, 4-5 February 2020).

100. A correspondence related to the SPAMI periodic review (including follow-up of previous reviews and forthcoming reviews) is circulated to the concerned Contracting Parties during the second half of March. Furthermore, the ToRs for the elaboration of the 2020 Status Report on Mediterranean MPAs are under preparation jointly by SPA/RAC and MedPAN.

101. Field surveys to determine the distribution of the main marine habitats, including the most sensitive ones, are ongoing in Malta and Tunisia. Distribution and sensitivity maps of the main marine habitats in Morocco, Algeria and Turkey are available at the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform.

Strategic Outcome 3.5: Technical assistance and capacity building at regional, sub-regional and national levels to strengthen policy implementation and compliance with biodiversity -related national legislation

102. SPA/RAC supported the participation of an Egyptian researcher to the regional training on the winter water-birds census organized in Tunisia during January 2020. Furthermore, a regional training session on the identification of marine key habitats (Common Indicators CI-1, EO1 and CI-2, EO1 of IMAP) and the use of SDF web application is planned during the second half of 2020 in synergy with the capacity building of the IMAP/MPA project.

103. In the framework of the EU-funded project “ODYSSEA”, after two Summer Schools held in 2018 (on “Operational Oceanography for Science, Business and Society”) and 2019 (on “Oceanography and Fisheries in the Mediterranean”), SPA/RAC is leading the preparation of a 3rd ODYSSEA Summer School that will be organized in Tunisia in September 2020 on the topic of “Spatial Oceanography”, with 25-30 participants from Mediterranean countries. During the first three months of 2020, SPA/RAC has exchanged and achieved the confirmation of the following key institutions to support the training with their expertise contribution: COSPAR (Committee on Space Research), LEGOS (Laboratoire d'études en géophysique et océanographie spatiales), ESA (European Space Agency) and EUMETSAT (European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites).

104. SCP/RAC finalized the selection process for the implementation of SCP solutions to prevent Marine Litter in MPAs. Three pilot projects will be implemented in Cabo de Gata (Spain), Delta del Ebre (Spain) and Miramare (Italy). The focus will be on implementing systems for reusable glasses, collection of beverage packaging and fishing boxes.

Strategic Outcome 3.6: Enhanced cooperation at regional, sub-regional and national levels to protect and conserve biodiversity and ecosystems

105. SPA/RAC participated at the 13th ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee meeting (Cap d'Ail, France, 26-28 February 2020) where a draft joint programme of work has been presented and discussed. The main joint activities will focus on the implementation of the national cetacean monitoring programmes in south Mediterranean countries through the IMAP/EcAp process and the Quiet MED II project; the evaluation and the update of the action plan for the conservation of cetacean in the Mediterranean; and, a capacity building programme.

II.4 Core Theme III: LAND AND SEA INTERACTIONS AND PROCESSES

Strategic Outcome 4.1: Strengthening regional implementation of the obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, and of programmes of measures in existing Regional Strategies and Action Plans

106. To support the socio-economic evaluation of measures in Regional Strategies and Action Plans, Plan Bleu/RAC participated and contributed to the meeting and workshops with stakeholders under the MEDREGION project (Rome, Italy, 12-14 February 2020). Plan Bleu/RAC also participated in the meeting of the European Commission's Working group on Programme of Measures, Economic and Social Analysis (WG POMESA) (Brussels, Belgium, 17 February 2020).

Strategic Outcome 4.2: Development of new action plans, programmes and measures, common standard and criteria, guidelines

107. A detailed workplan for the preparation of a toolbox for the analytical phase of the MSP process has been drafted, as well as the ToRs for a consultancy. Online consultations have taken place with the representatives of several Contracting Parties who are in charge of MSP.

Strategic Outcome 4.3: Strengthening national implementation

108. An exchange of e-mails took place in February with the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the signature of the CAMP Agreement. However, there is still no concrete response from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

109. Feasibility Studies prepared in 2019 for the CAMP between Cyprus and Israel were exchanged between the two countries. PAP/RAC's Focal Points in these two countries are to organize by 20 March 2020 national consultations to identify possible joint activities. A meeting with the two countries is planned for April 2020 in PAP/RAC's premises.

110. A joint Feasibility Study was prepared for the CAMP Albania-Italy and approved in 2019. The next step, i.e. the preparation of the CAMP Agreement, is pending signature of a new bilateral agreement between Italy and UNEP/MAP, as the development of this CAMP has started as a part of the 2018-2019 bilateral agreement.

Strategic Outcome 4.4: Monitoring and assessment

111. To implement SDG 14 in the Mediterranean by promoting the Blue Economy, Plan Bleu/RAC published, disseminated and presented on three occasions a report on lessons and perspectives based on 40 case studies. Furthermore, the methodology to analyze the replicability potential and conditions is under development and a concept note for a workshop on sustainable aquaculture is under finalization.

112. Negotiations have started with one Contracting Party to test in practice the Land-Sea Interactions (LSI) methodology developed within the SUPREME and SIMWESTMED projects. Relevant ToRs have been drafted and the activity will start as soon as the final agreement with the country is reached.

113. In the framework of the GEF Adriatic Project, a capacity-building meeting between the Montenegrin national experts, INFO/RAC, PAP/RAC and SPA/RAC was organized in Podgorica, Montenegro, on 4 and 5 February 2020, with main objective to identify how national data on biodiversity, non-indigenous species, eutrophication, contaminants, marine litter, and hydrographic parameters would comply with the format of the INFO/MAP system. On 6 February 2020, the GEF Adriatic coordination team meeting took place. National Integrated Monitoring Programmes for Montenegro and Albania were drafted, and formal national consultation processes are ongoing.

Strategic Outcome 4.5: Enhanced capacity at regional, sub-regional and national levels including technical assistance and capacity building

114. The structure and contents of the Strategies and Action Plans regarding the use of the Geoportal developed within the EU-funded project PORTODIMARE for the preparation of marine spatial plans and/or coastal management plans by partners from four countries of the Adriatic-Ionian subregion have been defined. Preparatory activities for the 2nd training course for partners initially scheduled for 24-25 March in Pula, Croatia, were completed, but due to the measures to contain the coronavirus outbreak the training was postponed.

Strategic Outcome 4.7: Identifying and tackling with new and emerging issues, as appropriate

115. PAP/RAC will start the preparation of an integrated management plan for the Damour area, together with Lebanon and other partners, as soon as the GEF MedProgramme is initiated.

II.5 Cross-cutting Theme I: INTEGRATED COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT (ICZM)

Strategic Outcome 5.3: Strengthening national implementation.

116. Together with the eligible countries, PAP/RAC has been waiting for the start of the GEF MedProgramme in which gap analyses in support of the ratification of the ICZM Protocol are included. In the meantime, the MAVVA-funded project for Gar El Melh wetland was used to support the ratification process in Tunisia, which is approaching its final stage.

117. PAP/RAC is liaising with Lebanon and Egypt on the preparation of the National ICZM Strategies in these two Contracting Parties, which will be supported by the GEF MedProgramme.

Strategic Outcome 5.5: Enhanced capacity at regional, sub-regional and national levels including technical assistance and capacity building

118. The final report on the MedOpen Advanced training course, which was finalized in December 2019, was prepared. Negotiations have started on updating the technical infrastructure for this online training course.

Strategic Outcome 5.6: Enhanced cooperation at regional, sub-regional and national levels

119. The ICZM Platform, launched in the previous biennium, has been populated with new material.

II.6 Cross-cutting Theme II: SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION (SCP)

Strategic Outcome 6.1: Development of new action plans, programmes of measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines and implementation of current ones

120. In collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation and in partnership with the Regional Environment Centre (REC) Turkey, SCP/RAC finalized the background study on SCP and submitted it for the final approval of the Ministry. The study is based on the workshops organized in 2019 (the first focusing on the public sector, the second on the private sector and the third being sector-oriented) and a stakeholder survey conducted online. Four flagship and six pilot projects were developed for SCP within the Electrical and Electronic Equipment (EEE) value chains that was selected as the focus of the background study.

121. The Coordinating Unit and SCP/RAC held online coordination meetings and prepared joint Terms of Reference for the mid-term evaluations of the MSSD and the SCP Regional Action Plan. Specific ToRs for the recruitment of external

experts to support the process are under development.

122. SCP/RAC prepared ToRs for the baseline studies for the development of regional measures for green and circular businesses (on the situation in the region and on the international experience).

Strategic Outcome 6.2 Monitoring and assessment

123. SCP/RAC developed a comprehensive set of indicators for the most representative sustainable entrepreneurship sectors: Circular Economy / Sustainable Waste Management; Organic Farming; Renewable Energies; Eco-tourism; Eco-building. For each sector, a full set of Indicators has been developed including a characterization and methodological guidance for all the Indicators. Indicators will be added to the Online Platform (in line with the PoW Activity 6.3.1.1) as a tool to allow sustainable entrepreneurs to assess their environmental, social and economic results.

Strategic Outcome 6.3: Enhanced capacity at regional, sub-regional and national levels including technical assistance and capacity building

124. SCP/RAC is developing an Online Platform for Sustainable Business Development. In addition to already available tools (such as green business model and plan methodologies, and access to finance toolkit) new tools are being developed (eco-design tool, access to market, as well as Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning [MEAL] system). Furthermore, in the framework of the second phase of the SwitchMed Project, SCP/RAC is creating National Partnerships of Business Support Organizations (BSOs) in eight southern Mediterranean states. Local Partners have already been engaged and have started to gather the rest of the BSOs in three states (Lebanon, Palestine and Morocco). In the rest of the states, Local Partners will be formally engaged during the coming months. Once the National Partnerships will be launched, SCP/RAC will start the methodological transfer and the capacity building programme targeting BSOs.

Strategic Outcome 6.4: Enhanced cooperation at regional, sub-regional and national levels to prevent and control marine pollution

125. The database of financial institutions that is a core aspect of the online self-help tool of the SwitchersFund is being updated by SCP/RAC in collaboration with the partners of the EU-funded ENI CBC Green Impact MED project. A partnership between the SwitchersFund and the `clim@competition2020` managed by the Green Growth Fund has supported the participation of Switchers in the award. Synergies with the EU financed PRIMA Programme is explored with a focus on the sustainable agro-food sector start-ups. New visual identity and communication materials of the SwitchersFund have been developed such as a draft Leaflet for Donors and a draft Leaflet for Investors.

126. Mapping of sustainable tourism solutions has started in Tunisia and a workshop is planned to be organized in May 2020 to discuss the barriers and challenges for market links, with the participation of a number of European buyers. This activity aims at facilitation of deals. The actions in Lebanon are currently on hold.

127. In partnership with the Turkish Business Council for Sustainable Development, SCP/RAC is preparing a publication on environmental challenges and Circular Economy business opportunities within the clothing and textiles value chains. The publication includes a framework on Circular Economy business strategy categories and business models specific to the fashion industry and 25 detailed case studies. The publication will be used for the development of open innovation challenges for scaling up eco-innovative business solutions.

128. An access-to-market tool is under development as part of the EU-funded ENI CBC Green Impact MED project, led by SCP/RAC. 200 coaching sessions will be organized with the project partners. The project structure for the delivery of these sessions is under development at this stage. A partners meeting is planned for end of April.

129. The new web platform of the Switchers community is under preparation and will be launched by SCP/RAC in April 2020. The social media strategy is revised and under implementation. The social media accounts have reached 15,000 followers. An Instagram account has opened. A gathering of the community on 3-4 November 2020, in Rimini, Italy, back-to-back with ECOMONDO, is planned (SwitchMed Connect).

IL7 Cross-cutting Theme III: CLIMATE CHANGE

Strategic Outcome 7.1: Strengthening the regional implementation of the obligations under the BC and its Protocols, and of programmes of measures in existing Regional Strategies and Action Plans

130. Plan Bleu/RAC has identified promising initiatives and partners, in the context of the InterregMED programme, in particular under the Blue Growth Community project. Further collaboration will be sought following this first stage.

Strategic Outcome 7.2: Development of new action plans, programmes and measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines

131. To promote the integration of Nature Based Solutions in Climate Change Adaptation Strategies, Plan Bleu/RAC is in preparation of a Multipartner workshop during the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020 (Marseille, France, 11-19 June 2020).

132. SPA/RAC is supporting Contracting Parties to enhance the marine biodiversity component on their updated National Determined Contributions (NDCs), in line with the UNFCCC COP21 Paris Agreement.

133. Guidelines for enhancing coastal resilience are being developed by PAP/RAC in the framework of the EU-funded ADRIADAPT project. All material has been drafted and the development of the publication is in an advanced stage.

Strategic Outcome 7.3: Strengthen national implementation

134. The catalogue of adaptation options under the EU-funded ADRIADAPT Project is under development by PAP/RAC. The template for presenting the adaptation options was agreed among the partners and a group of experts is been working on the development or updating of approximately 50 adaptation options.

135. A training course on adaptation to climate change was organized for the experts and technicians of the City of Vodice (a partner in the EU-funded ADRIADAPT Project) on 20 February 2020, at Vodice, Croatia. The course aimed at providing knowledge and scientific and regulatory references to identify relevant adaptation options tailored to climate change effects that impact Vodice the most, namely urban heat and flash floods. The first part of the input study on impacts of climate change on the narrow coastal belt in the pilot areas (cities of Šibenik and Vodice) was drafted, while the analysis of the consequent impacts on the sea is under development. Data collection is in progress.

Strategic Outcome 7.4: Monitoring and assessment

136. The report on socio-economic indicators associated with climate change vulnerabilities in MPAs, prepared by Plan Bleu/RAC in collaboration with SPA/RAC, is under finalization for publication by mid-2020.

Strategic Outcome 7.5 Enhanced capacity at regional, sub- regional and national levels including technical assistance and capacity building.

137. A large science-policy event is in preparation and will take place in Marseille, France, on 2-4 September 2020. The event is organized by Plan Bleu/RAC in partnership with the MISTRALS research programme and the MedECC network.