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40<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Executive Coordination Panel

Rome, Italy, 30-31 January 2020

**Report of the Meeting**

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UNEP/MAP  
Athens, 2020

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## **I. Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting**

1. The 40<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Executive Coordination Panel (ECP) was held on 30-31 January 2020, hosted by INFO/RAC, in Rome, Italy. The meeting was chaired by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) Coordinator and attended by the Deputy Coordinator, the Heads of MAP Components, the MAP Programme Officer responsible for governance issues and the Policy and Programming Expert. The list of participants is presented in Annex I to this report.
2. Mr. Gaetano Leone, UNEP/MAP Coordinator opened the meeting at 9:30 a.m. on 30 January 2020.

## **II. Agenda Item 2: Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work**

3. The Coordinator welcomed the ECP members and made a brief overview of COP 21, highlighting its key outcomes and expressing his overall satisfaction for the meeting. He noted that the 40<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting will focus on the main tasks for the biennium 2020-2021 and in particular for its first year. He thanked the ECP members for the inputs already received in view of the meeting and noted that the main scope of the exercise on the strategic priorities was to collect the ideas of all participants in order to develop a shared vision for the biennium 2020-2021.
4. The meeting reviewed and adopted the Provisional Agenda prepared by the Secretariat, as in document UNEP/MED ECP.40/1.

## **III. Agenda Item 3: Implementation of the PoW 2020-2021:**

### **(a) Strategic Priorities for 2020**

5. The Coordinator introduced the issue, stressing that the main scope of the tables on strategic issues, that were completed by all ECP Members and Coordinating Unit staff, was to simulate a strategic discussion and not to provide a formal and prescriptive list of issues. He noted that a retreat will take place in mid-February involving all Coordinating Unit staff and added that during the ECP meeting he expected a short, informal discussion, focusing on the strategic priorities, on why they are important, why/how they will be implemented and how they will benefit the MAP-Barcelona Convention system. He started by highlighting his priorities for the biennium, which included stabilizing the important role of MAP, developing the new UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS), implementing successfully the Programme of Work (PoW), providing a clear mapping of success stories to increase visibility and effective outreach and, finally, increasing well-being through the pride gained from everyday work.

6. The directors of the MAP components presented the priorities that they consider important within the mandates of their respective components. The main points are summarized as follows:

(a) INFO/RAC: Strategic priorities highlighted were: Data Integration, Digitalization of Contracting Parties, Increasing MAP system's visibility, Strengthening communication in MAP, Creating a dynamic interchange system with Contracting Parties. Challenges/enablers mentioned were resource mobilization, increase of internal awareness and enlargement of networks, including with stakeholders. In the discussion that followed, the Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator stressed the importance of increasing visibility and of the MAP system being "projected as one", while the Deputy Coordinator noted the importance of the IMAP infosystem being operational by the end of the biennium and the priority of preparing the data management policy.

(b) Plan Bleu/RAC: Strategic priorities highlighted were: Communicating on the assessment reports, Implementing the MED 2050 foresight roadmap, Strengthening/sustaining the role of Plan Bleu as observatory, Supporting the MTS preparation, Supporting long-term science-policy interface (SPI) including through the MCSD, Supporting other MAP components (e.g. on SPI, socio-economic evaluation, observation, indicators), Supporting capitalization and mainstreaming of policy and private

innovations (e.g. on blue economy, sustainable tourism, nature-based adaptation to climate change). Challenges/enablers mentioned were securing adequate resources, being strategic and concrete/operational at the same time, the fact that national observatories are weakened in some countries, limited data availability (especially coastal), and the means to provide adequate continued support to MedECC. In the ensuing discussion the Coordinator stressed the importance of a strong and collective MAP contribution to the 2020 UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, Portugal, as well as of enhancing visibility of the knowledge gained through the work of the MAP system. The possibility of having a future ECP meeting in Nairobi to allow interaction with UNEP headquarters, on issues such as SPI and beyond, was also mentioned.

(c) MED POL: Strategic priorities highlighted were: Preparation of new Regional Plans, Monitoring and Assessment (IMAP), Reporting (standardizing, quality assurance of data, harmonization), Capacity building, Enhance scientific work/SPI, Enhance partnerships (including with private sector and International Financial Institutions). Challenges/enablers mentioned were securing adequate resources to meet the expectations of Contracting Parties, synchronising administrative procedures with operational scope/needs, lack of data and data handling, decreasing dependency on consultancies (which have a narrow scope) and increasing interactions with scientific and academic institutions. In the ensuing discussion, the Coordinator stressed that the MAP system has a long experience and achievements on pollution issues and should be the leader on marine pollution matters in the Mediterranean (regarding more traditional pollutants as well as emerging ones). The head of MED POL noted the issue of wastewater treatment in relation to pollution; he also highlighted the need of investments, especially for Contracting Parties facing political/social challenges leading to a shift of their focus on environmental issues.

(d) REMPEC: Strategic priorities highlighted were: Enforcing legal instruments (on illegal discharges, etc.), Enhancing synergies with partners (e.g. IMO, EMSA, CETMO), Moving towards a Mediterranean SOx Emission Control Area (SECA), Implementing the Offshore Action Plan, Creating networks of sub-regional agreements, Modernising a cooperative platform between the Coordinating Unit and MAP components (on planning, monitoring, reporting). Challenges/enablers mentioned were ensuring links with external processes, overcoming instability and possible lack of political interest in some Contracting Parties, and ensuring adequate resources. In the ensuing discussion the importance of strengthening partnerships was highlighted (including with financial institutions) as well as the added value of increasing internal communication in MAP and of doing things together as a system. The Coordinator stressed the opportunity of including the above considerations when preparing the new MTS.

(e) PAP/RAC: Strategic priorities highlighted were: Upscaling Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in MAP and in the Contracting Parties, Ensuring a strategic shift towards Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), Streamlining Climate Change, Creating an enabling environment for IMAP coastal indicators monitoring, Enhancing capacity building and raising awareness, Placing climate change as a constitutive element of the MAP system. Challenges/enablers mentioned were ensuring adequate resources, the fact that MSP is a new issue for many CPs, which is both a challenge and an opportunity for MAP playing a leading role, the low level of importance placed on coastal indicators and the need to strengthen capacities to run the MedOpen educational programme. In the ensuing discussion the Coordinator stressed the importance of increasing the number of ratifications of the ICZM Protocol and the need to liaise with relevant/interested CPs (possibly organizing country conferences).

(f) SPA/RAC: Strategic priorities highlighted were: Enhancing the visibility and recognition of the role of SPA/RAC (through MAP's mandate) and the involvement/contribution to global processes, Sustaining SPA/RAC's activity level and budget. Challenges/enablers mentioned were data management, ensuring adequate resources, the links of MAP and SPA/RAC with main partners (e.g.

MedPAN) and the ownership/responsiveness of Contracting Parties. In the ensuing discussion the Coordinator stressed the importance of 2020 for biodiversity issues (Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, EU strategy on biodiversity, IUCN global conference) and the need for a clear role of MAP in contributing to these processes and to their follow-up. The SPA/RAC Director stressed the importance of the MAP system being continuously present in the countries with activities, so that interaction is ensured.

(g) SCP/RAC: Strategic priorities highlighted were: Mapping the state of implementation of SCP in the Mediterranean, Supporting and enhancing green and circular businesses, Supporting implementation of the marine litter regional plan (prevention/ focus on single-use plastics), Consolidating the SCP network, Improving online tools on SCP, Streamlining circular economy/SCP with blue economy, and climate change. Challenges/enablers mentioned were the wide range of issues under SCP as a term/notion, the need to enhance active involvement of Contracting Parties and partners, the fact that SCP issues go beyond environment (while the Ministries of Environment are the main MAP counterparts in CPs), the political situation of some CPs and outdated communication tools (in particular the SCP/RAC website and logo).

7. In his closing remarks, the Coordinator remarked that for this exercise to be meaningful there is a need to follow-up and to adjust the way to deliver. He encouraged the members of the ECP to share the vision of strategic priorities with their colleagues in the respective MAP components and to use them for the implementation of the COP 21 outcome, including the Programme of Work, and also as an input to the preparation of the next MTS. He suggested to revisit the strategic priorities at the end of 2020 to see progress, noting that there is always the “trap” of the dichotomy between strategic and bureaucratic considerations, which should be avoided.

#### **(b) Implementation of the Decisions adopted by COP 21**

8. The Coordinator stressed the importance of starting immediately the implementation of the outcome of COP 21 and of effectively engaging partners in the work of MAP. The meeting then discussed specific actions as contained in the relevant action tables for the implementation of COP 21 decisions prepared by the Coordinating Unit.

9. On the sustainable development dashboard, it was noted that already much work has been dedicated in the process and that momentum should not be lost. On data gaps, it was suggested to engage with Contracting Parties asking them to provide relevant data. It was noted that the integration of the SCP indicators within the MSSD ones should not be just a mechanic exercise and should take into consideration the needs of populating the indicators. On the issue of the MSSD and SCP Action Plan mid-term evaluations it was noted that this should be included in the planning and priority tool with a clear timeline. On the issue of the working groups to be established (for example for the implementation of the decisions on biodiversity and SECA) it was noted that (a) these should be gender-balanced and (b) for existing groups it should be decided if these would be re-confirmed (with the same membership) or re-established. On the Offshore Action Plan implementation, the possibility was considered of reaching to the industry to provide support through the possible secondment of an expert.

10. The Deputy Coordinator stressed that, when implementing the Programme of Work, the elements coming from the COP decisions should be considered even if they are not reflected as such in the PoW text. This holistic approach should also be reflected when filling the planning and priorities tool.

#### **(c) Priority Planning for 2020-2021, including the Updated Form**

11. The Policy and Project Expert described the updated form of the planning and priority tool, developed in MS Excel. He noted that emphasis was placed on reflecting the themes of the MTS and that the forms are based on the deliverables included in the PoW. He also informed that the tool will be filled every 6 months to coincide with the reporting periods and that reporting is to be done on deliverables (and not activities).

12. INFO/RAC informed the meeting that a new tool was being prepared by the RAC to allow online collaboration, and that the planning and priority forms would be uploaded on this tool so that they are filled online and in parallel by everybody. The Deputy Coordinator noted that the Coordinating Unit made every effort so that the Project Document is finalized very early in the biennium which would allow expenditure to start immediately.

13. All participants agreed that the new format of the planning and priority tool is better than the previous one and that the forms will be completed every six months (mid-February, end-July, end-January, mid-July).

#### **(d) Status of Preparation of the Project Documents 2020-2021**

14. The Deputy Coordinator informed that for the current biennium one consolidated Project Document is being prepared and will be signed by the Coordinating Unit and UNEP Headquarters, while Project Cooperation Agreements were prepared and cleared by the Directors of the Regional Activity Centres. She added that the first instalment for the implementation of the PoW will be on an annual basis. In the ensuing discussion, RAC directors agreed that the process was much faster this time.

15. Regarding procurement rules, the Director of SPA/RAC noted that host country regulations are used and reminded of the analysis and ceilings provided following a relevant exercise by UNEP Headquarters two years ago. The Coordinator informed the meeting that the Head of Administration of Corporate Services Division will visit the Coordinating Unit in early 2020, and that this will provide the opportunity for a teleconference with all RAC Directors on procurement issues.

16. INFO/RAC brought to the attention of the meeting the issue of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union and the implications it may have to the MAP components based in Members States of the EU, since they all manage data. The Coordinator noted that there has been already some background work in the Coordinating Unit on this issue and an exchange with UNEP Headquarters and added that relevant feedback will be provided to the MAP components.

	Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
1.	Revisit Strategic Issues prepared by MAP components to assess/discuss progress	All MAP components	End of 2020
2.	Explore the possibility for country conferences to increase ratifications of the ICZM Protocol	Coordinating Unit and PAP/RAC	Continuously in 2020
3.	Explore the possibility to hold an ECP meeting in Nairobi	Coordinating Unit and MAP components	Timely in the biennium
4.	Revise the action tables for the implementation of COP 21 decisions	Coordinating Unit	February 2020
5.	Develop online tool for collaborative/parallel work on documents	INFO/RAC	Mid-February 2020
6.	Fill the Planning and Priorities Tables (PPT)	All MAP components	Mid-February 2020
7.	Examine the possibility to use the new PPT tool for other reporting purposes (e.g. Bureau)	Coordinating Unit and MAP components	First semester of 2020
8.	Arrange a teleconference/face-to-face meeting with Head of Administration of	Coordinating Unit and MAP components	March 2020

	Corporate Services Division (while he is in Athens)		
9.	Examination of the applicability of GDPR EU regulation to MAP	Coordinating Unit	By March 2020

#### **IV. Agenda item 4: Strategic Brainstorming on the Development of the New Medium-Term Strategy and Related Timeline**

17. The Coordinator introduced the agenda item and the document “Short Note to ECP on the Preparation of the New MTS” prepared for this purpose by the Secretariat. This document included a short background note and a number of questions addressed to the ECP members in order to simulate a focused strategic discussion and preliminary definition of priorities during the meeting. The questions were listed under three main categories: (a) overall questions, (b) MTS format and structure, and (c) MTS preparation process. Further to the brainstorming during the ECP meeting, it was agreed that written inputs would be also sent to the Coordinating Unit by mid-February 2020. These inputs could be also very useful for the consultant that will work on the MTS. The main points raised during the discussion are:

##### ***MTS PREPARATION PROCESS***

18. The Coordinator informed the meeting that one integrated process will take place which will involve the Secretariat and MAP components, consultants, the Contracting Parties and stakeholders, including the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable development (MCSD). The process will be transparent, inclusive, and under the guidance of the Bureau. He added that he considers that the involvement of stakeholders in this process is very important and should start early in the process of the preparation of the new MTS (online consultation).

19. The meeting then discussed the involvement of MAP components in the preparation of the new MTS. It was decided that the Coordinating Unit will recommend to the Bureau the participation of the members of the ECP in the Steering Committee/Open-Ended Working Group for the preparation of the new MTS. The possibility was also discussed to hold a workshop with all professional staff of MAP Components, but the challenges to organize such a meeting (resources, etc.) were noted. To this end, the Coordinator proposed that discussions are held at technical level within each MAP component and that then the ECP will consolidate these discussions into concrete inputs to the process. It was agreed that the next ECP meeting would take place in May/June 2020 so that it can provide a timely input. It was also noted that it would be desirable that a first draft of the new MTS is disseminated at the RAC/thematic Focal Points meetings of 2021 with the understanding, however, that the MAP Focal Points are the main interlocutors on this issue, and they should conduct the internal consultations within Contracting Parties.

##### ***OVERALL QUESTIONS***

20. On the level of ambition, several views were presented. It was noted global goals exist/are developed (e.g. SDGs, Aichi Targets, Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework) and that the ones set in the MTS should at least match them. It was also noted that emphasis should be put in achieving the existing goals and not setting new ones; since adequate global targets exist; and that the Contracting Parties should set ambition levels based on what they need and on what can be delivered. Furthermore, the need to further strengthen links with the SDGs was mentioned. Enforcement was also highlighted as a priority, and especially collaboration with other MEAs and global programmes/initiatives to promote enforcement and implementation. It was also stressed that implementation of activities should be further linked to real impact on the state of the environment: the evaluation of the current MTS should look at the impact it had and the preparation of the new MTS should be prepared in a way that it will have an impact on the ground and that will ensure the commitment of the Contracting Parties. The Coordinator noted that the strength of MAP being a legal and enforcement framework should be

used at its best, while on implementation and results on the ground more work is needed, and collaborations should be sought to this extent.

21. Emerging forces in the region that can shape the future of the environment in the Mediterranean were also discussed in relation to partnerships that would promote the implementation of the MTS. The private sector, cruise sector, shipping industry, fishermen associations, local authorities, and their networks were mentioned. Overall it was agreed that a wider audience of actors should be involved for an effective implementation of the new MTS and to achieve tangible results on the ground. It was also highlighted that a branding and marketing of the MAP-Barcelona Convention system is needed to mobilize other partners, donors, sectors, etc., and that new ways of work should be explored, based on a clear vision.

22. It was also highlighted that links and work with the south Mediterranean countries provide a significant added value that should be further enhanced. Complementarities with the work of the EU in the north of the Mediterranean are also important in this respect. Another point raised was the importance to include in the new MTS guiding principles related to the work at the sub-regional level, since implementation at sub-regional level is valuable when it contributes to the regional targets.

23. The meeting then discussed the structure and resources required for the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system to effectively implement the new MTS. One question raised was if RACs should become centres of expertise or should focus on delivery of projects. It was noted that RACs were established as thematic centres to provide expertise in line with their mandates and that, over the time, there was a trend to shift more towards project management. The participants noted that a balance should be kept between expertise at sectorial level and capacity to integrate and have an overall systemic approach.

24. The importance was also noted of creating networks as well as closer links with centers of excellence in academia, science, research, innovation, and any other sources of knowledge. The need was also mentioned to build trust with researchers and to bring young researchers into policy/decision making. It was highlighted that new models of cooperation should be explored in this respect, such as long-term partnerships/agreements with universities. The fact that universities are creating spin-off companies to better interact with society and its needs was also mentioned as relevant.

25. On financial resources, it was noted that (a) there is a need to increase assessed contribution so that more MTF resources are used for implementation, and (b) that it is important to enlarge the donor basis, since MAP depends mainly on two external donors, namely EU and GEF. The recent involvement of donors, such as Italy/IMELS was showcased as a positive development in this respect.

26. In summarizing the discussion on the overall questions, the Coordinator noted that there is a need to identify elements that make MAP unique and integrate them in the MTS, stressing that while global MEAs have expertise in one issue, MAP integrates several issues related to the sea and coastal areas. The enforcement of SDGs and the capacity to integrate is a strength of MAP. Enforcement, visibility, integration and links with science and research are therefore key points for the new MTS. He added that all three levels are important, namely regional, sub-regional and national. It was also mentioned that there is a general feeling that pilot projects at national level are not sustainable if there are no resources available to follow-up on them. During the discussion it was highlighted that pilot projects are for test purposes in order to enable scaling-up at regional level. They are important to raise awareness at different levels of governance/administration and contribute in building capacities at local level. Their long-term usefulness is however dependent on a clear capitalization process all along the pilot, on the capitalization results' aggregation with complementary pilots, and on update of policy or funding instruments to scale-up positive innovations.



### **MTS FORMAT AND STRUCTURE**

27. On the format and structure of the new MTS, it was noted that a different approach is needed with emphasis on the overall vision, on objectives/targets (or priority areas/directions), and on the way to reach these objectives/targets. Also, on the means (capacity and instruments) to achieve them. The way the UNEP MTS is structured was mentioned as an example. Some participants considered a structure of the MTS without themes but only with objectives. The need to move towards headings that are integrative/aggregated was highlighted. There was agreement with the proposal of the Coordinating Unit to develop an MTS which addresses strategic outcome level (and not specific output level) and to revisit every biennium the strategic outcomes and their delivery. This would allow enough flexibility to work at output and activity level at a biennial basis which would be more efficient.

28. A more aggregated approach with a reduced number of themes was also discussed as an option. Several participants noted the importance of climate change as a theme. Finally, it was stressed that the MTS is also a communication and visibility tool. It was agreed that the discussion on the MTS would continue and that MAP components would provide written inputs to respond to as many questions included in the “Short Note to ECP on the Preparation of the New MTS” as possible.

	Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
10.	Recommend to the Bureau that the ECP is part of the Steering Committee/Open-Ended Working Group on the new MTS	Coordinating Unit	89 <sup>th</sup> Bureau Meeting (April 2020)
11.	Written inputs to the questions on the preparation of the new MTS	All MAP Components	Mid-February 2020

### **V. Agenda Item 5: Calendar of Meetings and Main Events for 2020-2021**

29. The MAP Programme Officer introduced the calendar of meetings and main events for 2020-2021, as submitted to COP 21. The MAP Components updated briefly the ECP on their upcoming events, while it was agreed that written inputs on both governance and technical meetings would be also sent through email. On international events, the importance of the active participation of UNEP/MAP at the 2020 UN Ocean Conference (Lisbon, Portugal, 2-6 June 2020) was highlighted, as well as the importance of presenting MAP as a system with one voice.

	Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
12.	Updates on the tentative calendar of UNEP/MAP (governance and technical) meetings and major international events	All MAP Components	19 February 2020

### **VI. Agenda Item 6: Date and Venue of the 41<sup>st</sup> ECP meeting**

30. The meeting discussed the timing of the next ECP meetings. It was decided that the next 41<sup>st</sup> ECP meeting would take place in Marseille, France, in May/June 2020, while the 42<sup>nd</sup> ECP meeting could possibly take place back-to-back with the 90<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting and the meeting of the SC/OEWG on the new MTS, planned to take place in Athens, Greece, on November 2020.

### **VII. Agenda Item 7: Any Other Matters**

31. The meeting considered other issues raised by its members. In this respect, the following issues were discussed:

32. The Coordinator updated the members of the ECP on his missions during January 2020 to Venice, for the Mediterranean Regional workshop - UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030, and to Brussels, for (a) participating at the meeting of the UNEP-EC Steering Committee as well as for (b) meeting with European Commission officials from DG ENVIRONMENT, DG NEAR, DG MARE, DG RESEARCH and the cabinet of the new Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries. On the UNEP-EC Steering Committee meeting, he noted that both project proposals where MAP is involved – EcAp MED III and Marine Litter MED II - were “cleared” by the Committee and received very positive comments. On the bilateral meetings with EC officials, he noted that the EU places great emphasis on the “European Green Deal”, that the new Commission is expected to prioritize the regional level in its work, and that there are potentials for further collaboration with DG RESEARCH, DG NEAR and DG MARE, especially on the issue of the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides. He also noted that he had the opportunity for an exchange with representatives from the CITES Secretariat who are interested in a formal collaboration with UNEP/MAP. The meeting also stressed the possibility for further collaboration regarding the Copernicus system and its use in the Mediterranean for climate change adaptation related issues.

33. The Coordinator reminded to the ECP members the need of sharing mission reports from important regional or global events of relevance to the MAP-Barcelona Convention system to which they participate (with emphasis on the substance).

34. The Director of REMPEC suggested that when a shared online tool is developed, this tool could also include the lists of all focal points.

35. The meeting was closed by the Coordinator at 14:00 on 31 January 2020.

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**Annex II**  
**Agenda**

## **Agenda**

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