



20th Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)

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Draft Working Paper: Sustainability Considerations in the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work 2024-2025

Note by the Secretariat

The present document aims at supporting the MCSD in producing opinions on the overall UNEP/MAP Programme of Work (PoW) to integrate sustainability considerations into the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system as a whole. It includes considerations of the sustainability dimension of the draft PoW for 2022-2023; and, A proposal for undertaking a consultation for the preparation of the draft Ministerial Declaration of the 23rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 23) (Portoroz, Slovenia, December 2023).

In line with Decision IG.25/19, “Programme of Work and Budget for 2022-2023”, which was adopted by COP 22, the proposed 2024-2025 Programme of Work (PoW) has been designed to ensure its continued effective implementation and achievement, in the middle of the new MTS cycle.

The proposed 2024-2025 Programme of Work (PoW) is built around 27 Outcomes to be delivered by implementing 108 main activities distributed over the MTS Programmes. Its preparation has taken into consideration and integrated to the extent possible the MSSD main Objectives and Strategic Directions, as well as the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs framework.

Based on the evidence from Mediterranean countries, the Secretariat drafted this working paper, which identifies the Process and Rationale for the Proposed Programme of Work 2024-2025, including Sustainability Considerations and information on the draft UNEP/MAP Programme of Work for 2024-2025. This draft paper is submitted for consideration and comments by the 20th Meeting of the MCSD towards its finalisation and dissemination.

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Sustainability Considerations in the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work 2024-2025

I. Introduction

1. The Secretariat prepared the present document to support the MCSD in providing recommendations on the overall UNEP/MAP Programme of Work (PoW), aiming to integrate sustainability considerations into the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system as a whole. The present document includes the following sections:

- a. An analysis of the sustainability dimension of the draft PoW for 2024-2025 taking into account the overall framework of the UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2027; and,
- b. A proposal for a consultation in order to include MCSD inputs in the preparation the draft Ministerial Declaration of the next 23rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 23).

2. Based on the provisional agenda of the 20th Meeting of the MCSD and its outcome, the MCSD is expected to bring issues of relevance to the attention of COP 23 and its Ministerial Session and Declaration, including the way forward in terms of possible commitments and outreach.

II. Rationale for the Proposed Programme of Work 2024-2025

3. The proposed 2024-2025 PoW is built in line with the UNEP/MAP MTS 2022-2027 as shown below:

MTS Programmes
Programme 1. Towards a Pollution and Litter Free Mediterranean Sea and Coast Embracing Circular Economy
Programme 2. Towards Healthy Mediterranean Ecosystems and Enhanced Biodiversity
Programme 3. Towards a Climate Resilient Mediterranean
Programme 4. Towards the Sustainable Use of Coastal and Marine Resources Including Circular and Blue Economy
Programme 5. Governance
Programme 6. Towards Monitoring, Assessment, Knowledge and Vision of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast for Informed Decision-Making
Programme 7. For Informed and Consistent Advocacy, Awareness, Education and Communication

Thematic Programme 1: Towards a Pollution and Litter-Free Mediterranean Sea and Coast-Embracing Circular Economy

4. The main objective of the proposed 2024-2025 PoW for this Programme is to support integrated responses for the prevention and reduction of plastic pollution and marine litter, including emerging sources of pollution, in the framework of the Regional Plans and NAPs under the LBS Protocol, the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031); the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan; and the Regional Action Plan on SCP, while ensuring links and synergies with other relevant regional and global instruments and processes, including

those under the IMO, the BRSC, UNEA Resolutions, as well as the anticipated international Treaty to address plastic pollution.

5. The proposed activities also aim to promote a transformational change embracing a circular economy and contribute to implementing the One Health Approach, linking human and ecosystem health with pollution reduction and prevention, considering lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. More specifically, the proposed 2024-2025 PoW envisages:

- a. Supporting the implementation of 2021 Regional Plans under the LBS Protocol through local, national, subregional and regional actions;
- b. Analysing the state of play of offshore windfarms' operations, including socio-economic aspects, and supporting the sustainable development of the sector;
- c. Undertaking pilot actions to prevent, eliminate and dispose of in an environmentally-sound manner obsolete chemicals under the MedProgramme;
- d. Strengthening the capacity of individual coastal states to respond efficiently to marine pollution incidents; improving pollution event follow-up and enhancing the level of enforcement and the prosecution of discharge offenders;
- e. Further supporting the ratification and effective implementation of MARPOL Annex VI, facilitating the entry into effect of the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter (Med SOx ECA);
- f. Delivering studies for a possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Nitrogen Oxides (Med NOx ECA) according to MARPOL Annex VI;
- g. Supporting public and private actors in preventing marine litter, plastic pollution and toxic chemicals, addressing the circular economy approach;
- h. Implementing the One Health approach in the Mediterranean concerning links between pollution and human health, with an initial focus on the health impacts of polluted seafood consumption and analysis of potential health-related indicators in line with Regional Plans and NAPs;
- i. Supporting the creation and development of circular economy businesses in key activity sectors, primary pollution sources.

Alignment with the MSSD:

7. This Programme fully aligns with Objective 1 in the MSSD “Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas”, which focuses on “Sea and coasts” and sits firmly and historically in the basin approach taken by the MAP and the Barcelona Convention. One of the main issues to be addressed under the Objective 1 according to the MSSD is the continued environmental degradation and increased risks from marine pollution and marine noise. which is addressed through the proposed 2024-2025 PoW with the provision of a concrete set of activities to reduce and prevent marine and coastal pollution and marine litter, in the framework of legal, regulatory and policy instruments adopted under the MAP Barcelona Convention system.

8. In addition, the proposed 2024-2025 PoW under MTS Programme 1 aligns with the Objective 3 of the MSSD ‘Planning and Managing Sustainable Mediterranean Cities’, in particular its Strategic Direction 3.4: Promote waste management within the context of a more circular economy” providing for a number of activities in support of the implementation of the 2021 updated Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management as well as the MSSD Objective 5: Transition towards a green and blue economy which encourages working besides being about renewable energy, waste management and sustainable consumption and production, the green economy concept draws on new and emerging paradigms such as the circular economy, the collaborative economy and the functional economy.

9. In particular, the proposed 2024-2025 PoW foresees activities on pollution prevention through SCP and circular approaches, sustainable business development, and eco-innovation, which are in line with Strategic Directions 5.3 “Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns”; 5.4 “Encourage environmentally-friendly and social innovation” and 5.5 “Promote the integration of sustainability principles and criteria into decision-making on public and private investment”.

Alignment with SDGs:

10. The proposed 2024-2025 PoW under MTS Programme 1 is aligned with targets under a number of relevant SDGs, especially the SDG 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), SDG 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all), SDG 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), SDG 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns), and SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). Its proposed activities can contribute in particular to targets 6.a, 6.3, 12.4, 12.5 and 14.1. In addition, gender considerations are integrated into the proposed PoW 2024-2025 activities under Programme 1 thus contributing also to SDG 5 on gender equality.

Thematic Programme 2: Towards Healthy Mediterranean Ecosystems and Enhanced Biodiversity

11. The main objective of the proposed 2024-2025 PoW for this Programme is to contribute to the effective implementation of the Post 2020 SAP BIO and to support the Contracting Parties in their efforts to establish, expand and efficiently manage a comprehensive, coherent and effective Mediterranean network of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). This Programme also focuses on enhancing ecosystem resilience through restoration, in line with the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, and improving the status of conservation of Mediterranean endangered and threatened species and critical habitats.

12. More specifically, the proposed 2024-2025 PoW envisages:
- a. Undertaking a state of play on existing practices and measures for biodiversity/ecosystems restoration, including their scientific evaluation; identifying innovative actions and supporting replication and sharing of successful approaches, including pilots and demonstration actions, taking into consideration synergies with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration;
 - b. Updating and implementing Regional Action Plans/Strategies on Species and Habitats and supporting the elaboration of sub-regional and national ones;
 - c. Implementing targeted priority measures to minimise non-indigenous species introductions and control their introduction pathways in line with the Regional Action Plan concerning species introduction and invasive species and the Ballast Water Management Strategy for the Mediterranean Sea (2022-2027);
 - d. Supporting elaboration and/or updating of national strategies and action plans for MPAs and OECM networks based on the orientations and priorities of the Post-2020 SAPBIO, Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and other relevant global frameworks and targets;
 - e. Expanding the MPA/SPAMIs and OECM networks, designating protected areas with enhanced protection levels, and enforcing efficient management measures for their long-term conservation;
 - f. Strengthening effective SPAMI management through continuing and fostering SPAMI Twinning Programmes;
 - g. Guiding enforcement activities through technical tools, standards, criteria, and guidelines tailored at regional or sub-regional level, as needed and relevant;

- h. Ensuring continuous knowledge enhancement and conservation status assessments of marine and coastal species and habitats covered by Regional Action Plans or by the Annex II and III of the SPA/BD Protocol;
- i. Using the functionalities of the Mediterranean Observatory for transversal analysis between human-induced pressures and conservation status and contributing to the definition of criteria for identification of sites with the highest ecological relevance and regeneration potential;
- j. Organising capacity-building programmes (scientific symposia, workshops and thematic regional, sub-regional and national training sessions) and improving the science-policy interface;
- k. Improving and adapting measures to mitigate the impact and interaction with coastal and marine human activities and climate change and enhancing their adoption by the Contracting Parties.

Alignment with the MSSD:

13. Maintaining the good status and health of rural ecosystems is fundamental for both biodiversity conservation and human well-being, as loss of biodiversity was identified as one of the key issues to be addressed by the MSSD. The proposed 2024-2025 PoW for Programme 2 aligns perfectly with the Objective 2 in the MSSD “Promoting resource management, food production and food security through sustainable forms of rural development” which is focused on maintaining rural ecosystems' good status and health as a fundamental element for diversity conservation and human well-being.

14. The proposed activities which aim at supporting the implementation of Post 2020 SAP BIO and the Regional Strategy on MCPAs and OECM as well as key Species and Habitats Action Plans contribute in particular to the MSSD Strategic Directions 2.1 relating to the promotion of the sustainable use, management and conservation of natural resources and ecosystems as well as Strategic Direction 2.3 calling for promoting networks of ecologically protected areas, and raising awareness of stakeholders on the value of ecosystem services and the implication of biodiversity, especially because of the rich natural resources in the Mediterranean region.

15. The proposed 2024-2025 PoW is also aligned with MSD Strategic direction 1.1 “Strengthen implementation of and compliance with the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention and other regional policy instruments and initiatives supplemented by national approaches”, in particular its Action 1.1.2 calling for implementing the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap to achieve healthy marine ecosystems and conserve marine biodiversity.

Alignment with SDGs:

16. The proposed 2024-2025 PoW under MTS Programme 2 is aligned with most of the targets under SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development), in namely targets 14.1, 14.2, 14.4, and 14.5, while there are also links with SDG 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss), especially its target 15.1 for the activities on coastal forests, as well as SDG 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts) especially target 15.1 for activities related to coastal protected areas. SDG 5 on gender equality is also addressed through gender considerations streamlined into this Programme activities.

Thematic Programme 3: Towards a Climate-Resilient Mediterranean

17. The main objective of the proposed 2024-2025 PoW for this Programme is to support Contracting Parties in their efforts to prevent or reduce the impact of climate change on coastal and marine ecosystems and increase resilience to climatic change and variability. It also aims at ensuring that Contracting Parties are provided with up-to-date scientific knowledge on related climate change. One significant outcome

foreseen under this Programme is the delivery of an updated Regional Framework for Climate Change Adaptation.

18. More specifically, the proposed 2024-2025 PoW envisages:
 - a. Building a region-wide common understanding of and promoting nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation in the Mediterranean; Assessing and disseminating nature-based technical solutions and best practices applicable to Mediterranean-specific context;
 - b. Developing and promoting guidance on nature-based solutions applicable to different coastal typologies to be considered in the preparation of coastal plans;
 - c. Observing and analysing emerging issues (mainly concerning offshore activities and climate change) and identifying appropriate measures to address their impacts on marine biodiversity and ecosystems;
 - d. Supporting elaboration of national ICZM plans and strategies aiming at increasing resilience to climatic variability and change;
 - e. Mainstreaming climate change adaptation into local ICZM plans;
 - f. Mobilising and implementing innovative solutions to reduce GHG emissions from ships in selected ports, including through energy efficiency and decarbonisation;
 - g. Supporting the operation and activities of the scientific network MedECC and developing science-based assessments and policy recommendations on thematic impacts of climate and environmental change in support of informed decision-making;
 - h. Contributing to climate change mitigation efforts through circular economy approaches, increased resource efficiency and carbon neutrality business strategies.

19. Under this Programme, the proposed main activities will focus on strengthening legal, policy and institutional frameworks at the regional and national levels to address climate change-related challenges efficiently and mainstreaming nature-based innovative solutions into regional policies implementation, including adaptation and mitigation to climate change, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development through technical assistance, capacity building and sector-focused reports.

20. In this regard, further discussion for implementing an integrated system approach and identifying interlinkages and nexus entry points for climate change-energy- and gender will be an added value during the MCSDD 20th Meeting sessions to enhance socio-economic and ecosystem conditions in the Mediterranean Region, with particular attention to coastal rural areas and climate-resilient community-based initiatives and innovative business models.

Alignment with the MSSD:

21. The proposed 2024-2025 PoW under MTS Programme 3 is aligned with MSSD in particular its Objective 4 focused on addressing climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean, which is expected to affect the Mediterranean region severely. Therefore, the MSSD calls for measurable progress towards enhanced use of green, low-carbon and climate-resilience practices in the Mediterranean region, focusing on the agricultural, food, and water sectors by accelerating climate-resilience policies integration, legislation and the uptake of climate-smart application and financing mechanisms. These goals are supported by the proposed activities under this Programme especially through promotion of increased resilience and climate change adaptation in coastal areas and guidance on nature-based solutions. Key to these efforts in the region will be also the development of the updated Regional Framework for Climate Change Adaptation. In addition, the knowledge generation and dissemination through MEDECC work foreseen in the proposed 2024-2025 PoW will significantly contribute to the achievement of climate related goals in the Mediterranean.

22. In this regard, the proposed 2024-2025 PoW activities are expected to contribute in particular to the MSSD Strategic Directions 4.1 “Increase scientific knowledge, raise awareness, and develop technical capacities to deal with climate change and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognizing and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems”, 4.2 “Accelerate the uptake of climate smart and climate resilient responses” and 4.4 “Encourage institutional, policy and legal reforms for the effective mainstreaming of climate change responses into national and local development frameworks, particularly in the energy sector”.

23. In addition, the proposed 2024-2025 under Programme 3, especially its activities on climate change adaptation in coastal areas through ICZM is aligned with Strategic Directions under the MSSD Objective 3, in particular Strategic Direction 3.1 “Apply holistic and integrated spatial planning processes and other related instruments, as well as improved compliance with respective rules and regulations, to increase economic, social and territorial cohesion and reduce pressures on the environment” and 3.7 “Enhance urban resilience in order to reduce vulnerability to risks from natural and human-induced hazards including climate change”.

Alignment with SDGs:

24. The proposed 2024-2025 PoW under MTS Programme 3 is aligned with most of the targets under SDG 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts), especially targets 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, as well as targets under SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development), especially targets 14.1, 14.2, 14.4, 14.6. Gender considerations are also mainstreamed into this Programme thus aligning with relevant targets under SDG 5 on gender equality.

Thematic Programme 4: Towards the Sustainable Use of Coastal and Marine Resources Including Circular and Blue Economy

25. The main objective of the proposed 2024-2025 PoW for this Programme is to assist Contracting Parties in achieving the sustainability of coastal and marine resources through the synergetic implementation of planning and management approaches and integrating circular economy measures and solutions in crucial Blue Economy sectors. It also supports Contracting Parties’ efforts to implement the Offshore Protocol and the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan.

26. More specifically, the proposed 2024-2025 PoW envisages:

- a. Promoting integration of circular economy into key Blue Economy sectors, including through recommendations, pilot actions and sustainable entrepreneurship support;
- b. Implementing the ICZM Protocol and its Common Regional Framework, focusing on the preparation or updating National ICZM Strategies and coastal plans and vulnerability analyses for selected areas, supported by participatory foresight activities;
- c. Supporting on-the-ground activities in selected coastal areas through Coastal Area Management Projects (CAMP), including transboundary CAMP;
- d. Undertaking methodological work for ICZM focusing on the update of matrices from the Common Regional Framework for ICZM;
- e. Strengthening of the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) implementation through training, capacity building and development of a community of practice for MSP in the Mediterranean;
- f. Implementing key targeted measures of the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan and maintaining its governance, cooperation and partnership framework sustainable and operational;
- g. Promoting sustainable tourism and sustainable marine renewable energies in the Mediterranean, in conformity with the UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention framework and developing relevant guidelines;

- h. Supporting the development of national policies and pilot actions on SCP and circular businesses, as well as the implementation of SCP, circular economy and innovative sustainable economies at regional and national levels;
- i. Supporting effective and systemic use of economic instruments such as subsidy policies, conservative easements, nature conservation, and sustainable development tools.

Alignment with the MSSD:

27. Under this programme, relevant MAP Components, mainly PAP/RAC MedWaves, Plan Blue, and REMPEC will join efforts under the coordination of the CU to ensure the use of Sustainable Blue and Green Economy tools and approaches in the context of Sustainable Development and MSSD implementation and synergetic implementation of planning and management approaches, including the adequate consideration of Land-Sea Interactions (LSI) including innovative environmental management and economic instruments and application of defined measures within the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan (2016-2024) and facilitating the science-policy dialogue.

28. The proposed 2024-2025 PoW under MTS Programme 4 is directly aiming at supporting sustainable use of resources and promoting sustainable blue economy, including through the effective use of economic instruments and other tools for nature conservation and sustainable development. It is therefore fully aligned with the MSSD, in particular its Objective 5 which focuses on the transition towards a green and blue economy, based on the principle that socio-economic development needs to be harmonised with the environment and protection of natural resources to achieve the vision of the MSSD.

29. The proposed POW activities under this Programme are expected to contribute especially to the MSSD Strategic Directions 5.3 “Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns”, 5.4 “Encourage environmentally-friendly and social innovation”, 5.5 “Promote the integration of sustainability principles and criteria into decision-making on public and private investment” and 5.6 “Ensure a greener and more inclusive market that integrates the true environmental and social cost of products and services to reduce social and environmental externalities”.

30. In particular, the MSSD Objective 5 calls for creating green and decent jobs, focusing on youth and women, promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns, encouraging social innovation and environment-friendly practices, sustainability integration and mainstreaming in policies and decision-making processes, and supporting inclusive market approaches. Therefore, the MSSD promotes the blue economy concept through strong partnerships between maritime sectors and public authorities regarding the sustainable and equitable use of marine and coastal resources and other approaches as included under Strategic Directions 1.2.1 and 3.1.1, and 3.1.7 and 3.7.2.

31. A number of proposed activities under the Programme 4, in particular under the Outcome 4.1 “Sustainability of coastal and marine resources achieved through the synergetic implementation of planning and management approaches, including the adequate consideration of Land-Sea Interactions (LSI)” provide for support in the implementation of ICZM and MSP, including through CAMP projects, and they are therefore aligned also with MSSD Objective 3 on planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities, and in particular its Strategic Direction 3.1 “Apply holistic and integrated spatial planning processes and other related instruments, as well as improved compliance with respective rules and regulations, to increase economic, social and territorial cohesion and reduce pressures on the environment”.

Alignment with SDGs:

32. Due to the cross-cutting nature of the proposed PoW activities relating to sustainable blue and green economy, these are aligned with a number of SDG targets, in particular those under SDGs 8

(Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), SDG 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation), SDG 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns), SDG 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts) and SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development).

Foundational Programme 5: Governance

33. The main objective of the proposed 2024-2025 PoW for this Programme is to ensure the effective implementation and enforcement by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols, MAP Strategies and regional policies and measures and relevant COP Decisions while supporting policy coherence and complementarity among relevant work at global, regional and national levels and enhanced efficiency with the use of new digital approaches. It also aims at strengthening public institutions and enhancing partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagement, including with civil society organisations, the private sector, and the science-policy interface.

34. Significant outcomes foreseen under this Programme are the development of a revised Roadmap for ecosystem approach implementation in the Mediterranean and a revised Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

35. More specifically, the proposed 2024-2025 PoW envisages:

- a. Ensuring effective decision-making and review of the implementation of the legal and policy instruments by the MAP relevant bodies; Delivering a successful COP 24, in Egypt, in 2025;
- b. Supporting national efforts for further progressing on the ratification of the Protocols to the Barcelona Convention to enable their entry into force for as many CPs as possible;
- c. Reinforcing Contracting Parties' capacities on reporting on legally binding provisions of the MAP Barcelona Convention framework; developing legal indicators;
- d. Implementing the MAP Data Policy at regional and as appropriate at national levels and strengthening national capacities to implement it with closer support and dedicated workshops;
- e. Strengthening SPI networks in the scope of MAP work;
- f. Strengthening capacities for mobilising external resources to implement PoW and MTS and executing efficiently externally funded projects in their context, including finalisation of funding proposals within the Post-2020 SAP BIO Resource Mobilisation Strategy;
- g. Strengthening partnerships with prominent regional and global actors and scientific and academic networks/institutions; Enhancing participation and engagement of the civil society, as well as of the private sector;
- h. Promoting gender mainstreaming into UNEP/MAP operations and activities.

Alignment with the MSSD:

36. The only way forward to achieve the MSSD vision is through implementing shared objectives, active involvement of all stakeholders, cooperation, solidarity and participatory governance. Therefore, the proposed 2024-2025 under this programme is directly linked to the MSSD Objective 6 of Governance as a cross-cutting issue in the MSSD and a critical factor in the transition process to the green economy. The implementation of the Strategy had been strongly affected by governance frameworks and interlinkages between different sectors and administration levels; therefore, the MSSD focused on five pillars to improve environmental governance mainly: promote stakeholders' engagement, enhance international dialogue and cooperation, promote implementation and compliance with environmental obligations, promote education and research, and enhance regional capacities for information management. In this regard, governance is characterised by using an inclusive approach to include non-state actors in the decision-making process and, therefore, has to be flexible and adaptive.

37. The proposed PoW activities under this Programme, as outlined above, are expected to contribute in particular to the achievement of the MSSD Strategic Directions 6.1, focusing on enhanced regional, sub-regional and cross-border dialogue and cooperation, 6.2 on the promotion of the engagement of civil society, scientists, local communities and other stakeholders in governance process, 6.3 on the implementation of and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements including through policy coherence based on inter-ministerial coordination and 6.4. on education and research for sustainable development.

38. Of particular importance for the consideration of the MCSD meeting is the proposed activity 5.2.7. on the review of the MSSD through an inclusive, participatory process with the full engagement of the MCSD members. The proposed 2024-2025 PoW under Programme 5 also foresees a process for the review and updating of the roadmap for the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach and IMAP, which is very much linked with the MSSD Strategic Direction 1.1. in particular its foreseen action 1.1.2. "Implement the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap to achieve healthy marine ecosystems and conserve marine biodiversity".

The proposed 2024-2025 PoW under Programme 5, especially through its activities on the delivery of MCSD and its Steering Committee meetings, the MSSD review process and its general resource mobilisation activities is also aligned with the MSSD Strategic Directions relating to the implementation and monitoring of the MSSD, in particular the Strategic Direction 7.1 on the establishment and strengthening of structures for sustainable development implementation at national and regional scale, the Strategic Direction 7.2 on the establishment of regional processes for the implementation and monitoring of the MSSD and the Strategic Direction 7.3. on the MSSD financing.

Alignment with SDGs:

39. The proposed 2024-2024 PoW under Programme 5 is aligned with a number of SDGs across the board, in particular targets under the SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) and SDG 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development) especially its targets 17.1, 17.14, 17.16 and 17.17. Promotion of gender mainstreaming into UNEP/MAP operations and activities is among the main objectives of the proposed PoW under this Programme and it is therefore also aligned with relevant targets under SDG 5 on gender equality.

Enabling Programme 6: Towards Monitoring, Assessment, Knowledge and Vision of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast for Informed Decision-Making

40. The main objective of the proposed 2024-2025 PoW for this Programme is to recapitalise the work undertaken for implementing IMAP, enter into a new phase and deliver an updated IMAP for GES assessment based on the outcomes of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 Med QSR).

41. This Programme also aims to strengthen the Environment and Development Observatory to support CPs' decision-making. Another critical objective of the proposed 2024-2025 PoW for this Programme is to improve the information system for IMAP, including the integration of assessment tools, as well as the delivery of a Knowledge Management Platform for the MAP system.

42. More specifically, the proposed 2024-2025 PoW envisages:

- a. Implementing IMAP at the national and as appropriate sub-regional level taking into consideration the MED QSR 2023 recommendations and preparing thematic analyses and assessments as requested by the Contracting Parties;
- b. Maintaining and updating all InfoMAP components such as Barcelona Convention Reporting System (BCRS), National Baseline Budget (NBB) reporting system, complete IMAP Info

System for all IMAP Common Indicators and InfoMAP Spatial Data Infrastructure for the geographical data and maps (InfoMAPNode); as well as enhancing and updating InfoMAP tools as INFO/RAC Cloud tools;

- c. Strengthening national capacities to organise, upload, validate and release IMAP data and to establish a solid science-policy interface for the implementation of the ecosystem approach;
- d. Maintaining MAP Components' databases and products and ensuring full operability of the new MAP Knowledge Platform, allowing the migration, integration, harmonisation, management and update of InfoMAP System and MAP Components databases in a unique hub;
- e. Disseminating the main elements of the Med2050 foresight study widely, making full use of them for further strategic approaches through spin-off (thematic or geographical) activities and linking them with future MSSD preparatory activities;
- f. Strengthening work of global, regional, national and sub-national observatories on environment and development through data-sharing and capacity-building and updating the MSSD dashboard and the SCP indicators database and their integration into the World Environment Situation Room.

43. Under this programme, key activities will be implemented to strengthen the science-policy interface and decision-making by implementing science-based IMAP, foresight and other assessment tools and thematic indicators, including data-driven national IMAP-based monitoring programmes and building the national and institutional capacity for monitoring, evaluation, reporting and forecasting.

44. An essential part of this programme is led by INFO/RAC for maintaining and updating InfoMap System towards full integration into the Knowledge Management Platform and ensuring full implementation of the InfoMAP Spatial Data Infrastructure for the geographical data and maps (InfoMAPNode); in addition, to strengthen the MSSD and SCP Regional Action Plan monitoring framework and a regional observatory on the environment and development.

Alignment with the MSSD:

45. The third chapter in the MSSD focuses on implementation and monitoring aspects, and the MCSD is a key structure within the MAP system for supporting and monitoring the MSSD implementation, including the development of a comprehensive monitoring system and relevant indicators, as a cross-cutting issue among all strategic objectives, and updating the dashboard of sustainability indicators. Strategic Direction actions 2.1.3, 3.1.5, 4.1.1 and 4.1.6 are examples of assessment and monitoring integration approaches in the MSSD. Nevertheless, data collection and sharing remain a crucial challenge in this regard.

46. Under the proposed 2024-2025 PoW, the activity 6.3.13. aims at strengthening the MSSD and SCP Regional Action Plan monitoring framework including through the update of the MSSD dashboard as well as the work of global, regional, national and sub-national observatories.

47. The proposed 2024-2025 PoW under Programme 6 through its activities on MSSD monitoring framework and dashboard, is aligned with the MSSD Strategic Direction 7.4. containing four actions to ensure the regular monitoring of the Strategy at the national and regional levels. Through the proposed activities on monitoring, assessment, and foresight, the proposed PoW under this Programme is also aligned with the MSSD Strategic Direction 6.5 focused on enhancing regional capacities for information management.

Alignment with SDGs:

48. Considering that the Programme 6 is an enabling and therefore cross-cutting Programme of the MAP MTS 2022-2027, the respective activities of the proposed 2024-2025 PoW are also horizontally

aligned with SDGs and targets across the board, but they are especially aligned with targets under the SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) and SDG 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development).

Enabling Programme 7: For Informed and Consistent Advocacy, Awareness, Education and Communication

49. The main objective of the proposed 2024-2025 PoW for this Programme is to inform stakeholders and policymakers about the state of the Mediterranean Sea and coast to make them aware of the environmental priority issues and to disseminate knowledge and raise awareness and outreach of general public in particular youth, including through citizen science and digital campaigns.

50. It also aims at contributing to a digital transformation using new technologies to improve networking and MAP visibility. A key milestone in our advocacy campaign is celebrating with pride and inclusiveness the 50th Anniversary of MAP (1975), the 20th Anniversary of MAP II, and the current Barcelona Convention (1995), all adopted in Barcelona, Spain.

51. More specifically, the proposed 2024-2025 PoW envisages:

- a. Implementing the MAP Operational Communication Strategy 2024-2025 in the framework of the 2024-2029 Communication Strategy and updating it for the biennium 2026-2027;
- b. Publishing and disseminating the results from the 2023 MED QSR, the Med2050 Foresight, and other environmental assessment products;
- c. Delivering the MAP Knowledge Management Strategy and ensuring the functioning and maintenance of the MAP Knowledge Management Platform, integrating information and knowledge from the entire MAP system;
- d. Celebrating dedicated recognised Days of importance to the Mediterranean (i.e. Mediterranean Coast Day, SPAMI Day etc.) and UNEP/MAP system anniversaries, i.e. UNEP/MAP 50th anniversary, SPA/RAC 40th anniversary and INFO/RAC 20th anniversary;
- e. Delivering environmental and sustainability awards and certificates (e.g. WeMed Sustainability Award, Istanbul Environment-Friendly City Award, SPAMI Certificates) to enhance public awareness and outreach;
- f. Preparing and implementing education and awareness programmes on critical issues, including through e-learning tools with particular attention to youth;
- g. Developing and implementing a concrete communication and visibility plan towards COP 24.

52. An essential part of this programme is to strengthen MAP Advocacy for enforcement of the Barcelona Convention and support of key stakeholders and policymakers to a green renaissance underpinned by the circular economy and a sustainable Blue Economy. Also, to promote WeMed Mediterranean Sustainability Awards and enhance education, public awareness, and outreach on crucial MAP topics for general and specific targets, including with MAP partners, civil society, the private sector, and youth and women networks.

Alignment with the MSSD:

53. The proposed 2024-2025 PoW under Programme 7 is supporting as an enabling programme the achievement of all POW activities, and therefore can also contribute to the MSSD objectives horizontally. It is particularly aligned with the MSSD Objective 6 on Governance focused on education and research to enhance governance systems and as a cross-cutting SDG related to social issues and especially its Strategic Direction 6.4 explicitly focused on promoting education and research for sustainable development.

54. The MSSD promotes using education and raising public awareness in Strategic Objective 4 for climate change adaptation and research at the national and regional levels. Strategic Direction 6.4 focuses on implementing the Mediterranean Education for Sustainable Development strategy to integrate sustainability issues within formal education programmes. It also promotes the science-policy interface and the exchange of good practices and knowledge in all aspects of education and learning for sustainable development. In this respect, there is a high level of alignment between the MSSD and the proposed 2024-2025 PoW under Programme 7 focusing on advocacy, awareness raising, education and communication.

Alignment with SDGs:

55. Similarly to the previous Programme 6, considering that the Programme 7 is also an enabling and therefore cross-cutting Programme of the MAP MTS 2022-2027, the respective activities of the proposed 2024-2025 PoW are also horizontally aligned with SDGs and targets across the board, but they are especially aligned with targets under the SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) but also with SDG 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns) for thematic communication and awareness raising activities, in particular its targets 12.4, 12.5 and 12.8.

III. Consultation on the preparation of the Draft Ministerial Declaration of COP 23

56. COP 23 will be held on 4-8 December 2023, in Portoroz, Slovenia, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. COP 23, as customary in the MAP system, will have its Ministerial-level discussions which will lead to the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration.

57. Discussions are ongoing on the selection of the main theme of COP 23 and on the format of its high-level segment. A relevant proposal will be submitted to the 94th Meeting of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (Izola, Slovenia 20-21 June 2023), which is expected to provide advice on the way forward. The MCSD agenda and deliberation are expected to provide important substantive input to COP23 and for the selection of the main theme of COP23.

58. Further to the thematic aspects of the high-level segment, following a meeting between the Secretariat and the President of the Republic of Slovenia in April 2023, building on the experience at the last COP in Naples on Youth, and Antalya on Women, it was agreed that during COP23 events may be organized on Gender and Youth. In this respect, the President of Slovenia will lead the planned event on Women Leaders of the Mediterranean with a special focus on Youth and Education, including possibly through panel participation and/or a dedicated youth event.

59. As indicated above, the MCSD is expected to provide feedback and contribute to the preparation of the Ministerial Declaration, which will be prepared under the leadership of the Host Country of COP 23. In the course of the preparation of the draft Portoroz Ministerial Declaration, the involvement of stakeholders will be sought, with a focus on MAP Partners and MCSD members.

60. The 20th Meeting of the MCSD is invited to reflect on the above considerations and provide initial feedback on priority issues and key areas for taking into account sustainability considerations in the preparation of the Portoroz Ministerial Declaration. Further to this initial feedback to be provided during the MCSD meeting, it is also important for the MCSD to agree on a consultation process to provide further input during the preparation of the Ministerial Declaration. For example, the meeting may wish to consider giving the mandate to the MCSD Steering Committee to coordinate the process of providing the inputs by MCSD to the Ministerial Declaration. A second option could be to agree to establish an extended committee, with participation of the MCSD Steering Committee members and some further members of the MCSD in a voluntary basis, which will work together to draft a number of elements that would be presented to the MAP Focal Points meeting by the chair of the MCSD, for consideration and possible inclusion in the Ministerial Declaration.

61. The 20th MCSD meeting is expected to reflect on the above considerations and decide on the way forward.