



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

Marseille, France, 14-16 June 2023

Progress Report for the Period June 2021 – May 2023 and Specific Issues

Note by the Secretariat

Significant developments have occurred within the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP) – Barcelona Convention system, including the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), since the 19th Meeting of the MCSD held through a Videoconference on 7–9 June 2021. The Members of the MCSD and other partners showed progress in their renewed commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-2025 adopted by the MCSD members in 2016.

The work of the MCSD members and partners showed progress on several critical milestones and significant initiatives as indicated in the annexes of this progress report and information documents prepared for the present meeting. Substantive progress is reported notably in the Sustainability Dashboard, the MSSD Flagship Initiatives, the MED 2050 Foresight Study, the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan Towards 2030, the Gender-sensitive Assessments of Climate Change Risks and Gender Action Plan, the Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean, and in expanding Cooperation and Partnerships through participation in global and regional events and initiatives.

Conclusions and recommendations of the 19th Meeting of the MCSD were reflected in the Ministerial Declaration (UNEP/MED IG.25/27 Page 104) of the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 22) (7-10 December 2021, Antalya, Türkiye), as well as in the decisions included in the Report of COP22. Following the adoption of the COP 22 Decisions, the work of the MCSD in 2021-2023 focused, among other issues, on the implementation of the MSSD; MSSD Flagship Initiatives; Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard; the MED 2050 Foresight Study; preparatory work for the update of the MSSD, Sustainability Considerations in the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work 2024-2025, and the preparation of the 20th Meeting of the MCSD, including in relation to the inputs of the MCSD to COP 23,.

The MCSD work offers a unique opportunity to support the Mediterranean Region and countries to address the growing social and economic crises and ecological degradation challenges. The MCSD joint effort towards enhancing the implementation of the SDGs and expanding inclusive and sustainable socio-economic opportunities in the region, effectively contributes to poverty reduction, gender equality, and environmental protection at the national and sub-national levels. Applying an integrated approach to address these issues and identifying interlinkages between MSSD key thematic areas offers shared benefits in the Mediterranean Region. The 20th Meeting of the MCSD is expected to deepen discussions, expand partnerships and reach agreed actions for supporting critical thematic areas and priorities towards achieving the MCSD strategic goals in the Mediterranean.

An important update is that the Mediterranean reached a historic milestone in its endeavour for greener shipping, as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) adopted the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides (Med SOx ECA) effective on 1 May 2025. The adoption by IMO is an excellent example of a successful multilateral process stewarded by UNEP/MAP, as a result of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols forging consensus and submission of a coordinated proposal to the UN specialised agency.

The work of the UNEP/MAP- Barcelona Convention system is guided by the UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2022-2027 adopted by COP 22. The present document provides information on the work done after the 19th Meeting of the MCSD for the period June 2021– May 2023. It introduces specific issues for consideration and discussion by the 20th Meeting of the MCSD.

Progress Report for the Period June 2021 – May 2023 and Specific Issues

1. The second half of 2021 was marked by the preparation of the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols (COP 22) that was successfully held in Antalya, Turkey, on 7-10 December 2021. As indicated in the Note by the Secretariat, several major COP 22 Decisions reflecting the outcome of the 19th Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) (Videoconference, 7–9 June 2021) have been reached. Every effort has been made to ensure the effective implementation of these decisions and related activities by MCSD Members and other partners, including progress on implementing the Flagship Initiatives of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD).

2. At COP 22, 19 Decisions were issued covering several thematic areas including the following: UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2027, Compliance Committee, Governance, Assessment Studies, Regional Plans on Urban Wastewater Treatment and Sewage, Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, Effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas, Action Plans for the conservation of species and habitats under the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean, Designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides (Med SOX ECA) pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution, Development of Green and Circular Businesses and to Strengthen the Demand for more Sustainable Products, as well as, other decisions related to the amendments to the existing annexes of different protocols.

3. COP 22 offered an inclusive platform for renewed commitment in the Mediterranean and sent a clear signal that UNEP/MAP is ready to act effectively and timely to support the region in building back greener with solid environmental objectives. During the COP 22 meeting attended by 20 Contracting parties and more than 20 non-governmental organisations and other entities, the Secretariat received important signals of commitment and support from the Contracting Parties and heard the voices of stakeholders. During this Meeting, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols endorsed, *inter alia*, the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) of the First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) published by the MedECC scientific network in November 2020.

4. The Antalya Ministerial Declaration, adopted on December 9, 2021, acknowledged with satisfaction the substantial progress made in strengthening regional cooperation and enhancing coordination in implementing the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. The declaration recognised the critical role of regional cooperation, namely in the framework of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention, in addressing existing and emerging environmental challenges and supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular the ocean-related SDGs as well as relevant Goals and targets set at the global level. The Antalya Ministerial Declaration also called for Switching to a Climate Resilient, Resource Efficient and Sustainable Mediterranean.

5. Through the Antalya Ministerial Declaration, the Contracting Parties committed to continue and further enhance working in this direction through, *inter alia*, enhancing regional synergies and collaborations for optimising the effective and efficient use of resources; and the implementation of the ambitious outcomes of COP 22, the UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2027, and the decisions taken on this occasion as the embodiment of collective vision for the Mediterranean Sea and Coastal Areas.

6. The Antalya Ministerial Declaration calls for leaving a pollution-free legacy, protecting biodiversity and sustaining climate sustainability as a strong expression of political support to the collective endeavour within the UNEP/MAP– Barcelona Convention framework, to achieve a healthy Mediterranean Sea and coast in the context of sustainable development.

7. The Report of COP 22 (Reference Document UNEP/MED IG.25/27) includes, among other, the following decisions, which are of particular interest for the work of the MCSD:

- i. Decision IG.25/1: UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2027: The MTS 2022-2027 is aligned with the Rio+20 Outcome Document and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- ii. Decision IG.25/3: Governance, including Annex II “Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between UNEP/MAP and parliamentarians’ regional bodies, namely the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) and the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD)”, which are Members of the MCSD, and Annex V “Composition of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development for 2022-2023– Non-Contracting Party Members”, as reproduced in Annex I of the present document.
- iii. Decision IG.25/4: Assessment Studies, including the endorsement of the Summary for Policy-Makers (SPM) of the First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR 1) published by the network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC).
- iv. Decision IG.25/18: Set of Regional Measures to Support the Development of Green and Circular Businesses and to Strengthen the Demand for More Sustainable Products (see relevant publication in Document UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.1), and
- v. Decision IG.25/19: UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget for 2022-2023, providing substantive resources to implement the MTS 2022-2027.

8. Furthermore, the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean was developed under the coordination of the UNEP/MAP Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC), the technical guidance of the Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM), and in consultation with the Contracting Parties and the relevant regional and international organisations active in the Mediterranean. It was adopted by the Barcelona Convention COP 22 (Antalya, Türkiye, 7-10 December 2021).

9. In 2021-2023, two national Coastal Area Management Programmes CAMPs were launched (in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Israel), and the first transboundary CAMP between Albania and Italy for the Otranto area was implemented. Within the ongoing GEF MedProgramme, support is provided to Lebanon for the preparation of the National Strategy for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and to Montenegro and Morocco for the preparation of coastal plans for two coastal regions (Boka Kotorska and Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima, respectively). All these instruments will contain measures for improved coastal management, including land policy, adaptation to climate change, and governance mechanisms for sustainable coastal development.

10. During this reporting period, two meetings of the MCSD Steering Committee were held, in line with the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget 2022-2023 and the Terms of Reference of the MCSD. The 23rd Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee was held on 1-2 June 2022 through videoconference, while the 24th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee was held on 14 and 15 December 2022 in Athens, Greece.

11. During the 24th MCSD Steering Committee Meeting (14-15 December 2022, Athens, Greece), the members referred to the importance of the leading global events in this period, especially the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, where MAP was very active, and the UNFCCC COP 27 in Egypt (Sharm El-Sheik, November 2022), where MAP co-organized with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) the MedPavilion and presented the outcomes of COP 22, while MedECC acted as scientific advisor to the Pavilion steering committee. Gender perspective was also highlighted concerning a dedicated event in the MedPavilion.

12. In the meeting, several ideas for on-the-ground solutions were presented by the MCSD Steering Committee members, such as a need for national coordination to revive the importance of MSSD at the national level and the impact of the economic crisis in all countries on the timely implementation of environment protection related activities.

13. The MCSD Steering Committee members discussed the need to work more on positioning the MCSD in the next Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (December 2023, Portoroz, Slovenia) (COP 23) and increase its visibility in major global events of relevance. It was highlighted that the Steering Committee members should take the lead in this respect. The President of the MCSD Steering Committee noted that at COP 23, the Government of Slovenia as host country of COP23 plans to organise a special event to highlight the critical role and added value of the MCSD work.

14. The contribution of the MCSD Members was crucial for the delivery of activities planned by the COP 22 Decisions, with substantive resources provided by the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget for 2022-2023 (Decision IG.25/19). The present document outlines the progress of those activities and other specific issues relevant to the MCSD. At the same time, significant actions undertaken by MCSD Members and UNEP/MAP Components and the progress of the Flagship Initiatives are presented in information document UNEP/MED WG.560/Inf.4.

Specific Issues:

I. Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and Integration of SCP Indicators

15. Work on the Mediterranean sustainability dashboard, including the Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) indicators, was presented in the 24th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee, by Plan Bleu/RAC. The dashboard is now available in the frame of the Mediterranean page of the World Environment Situation Room (WESR). Plan Bleu/RAC referred to the ambition and perspective for the observatory in 2022-2023, the long-term objectives and the concrete actions under implementation, in particular in terms of open access, sharing of data and publications, monitoring of changes, and multi-criteria analysis.

16. The MCSD Steering Committee welcomed the work done by the Secretariat (Plan Bleu and the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) - MedWaves) during the period under reporting, including regular updates of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and other specific activities implemented in this framework. They reiterated the importance of development and population of legal indicators while also noting the challenges relating to the availability and sharing of data and the importance of enhancing dialogue and strengthening national capacities in this field. They also stressed the need to improve discussion and exchange of best practices between Contracting Parties on further integrating the legally binding obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in the national judicial systems.

17. During this period, SCP/RAC - MedWaves continued to update the SCP indicators to reflect the interlinkages between human activities and environmental status within the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, strengthening the dashboard on green, blue and circular economies. All the information is gathered on the Regional Observatory of the Environment and Sustainable Development [website](https://www.obs.planbleu.org/en/)¹, facilitating access to information, including factsheets, publications, and thematic maps. Plan Bleu/RAC produced the indicator factsheets linked to the Sustainable Development Goals as part of the periodic monitoring to follow the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-2025. <https://www.obs.planbleu.org/en/mssd/>. The Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard was updated in March 2023. Interactive maps of the MSSD's indicators (and more) are accessible through the Regional Observatory on [WESR: Mediterranean front page](#).

¹ <https://www.obs.planbleu.org/en/>

18. The compendium of the 28 "indicator factsheets" of the Mediterranean sustainability dashboard is updated every two years as a monitoring tool to follow up on the MSSD implementation at the regional level. The Dashboard was updated during the biennium 2020-2021 and covers the six topics of the MSSD 2016-2025, and, for the first time, all 28 indicators. It supports the Contracting Parties to report on SDGs implementation at the national level. The Regional Observatory's website has been redesigned.

19. This website compiles all information produced by Plan Bleu for the MSSD monitoring and, in particular, the dashboard. In addition, Progress on the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean (2016–2027) was measured using a set of SCP indicators that were developed with the support of the [SwitchMed I project](#) and adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols at COP 20 in December 2017.

20. There is an urgent need to strengthen capacities and resources in national administrations to address the SDGs adequately, particularly for monitoring programmes reporting on and following SDG indicators. Peer Learning, the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER), Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, and the Paper on Structures and Processes for Implementing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs in the Mediterranean Countries are among other initiatives the UNEP/MAP and Plan Bleu/RAC are taking to achieve this purpose.

21. To this aim, a better interaction among reporting processes on SDGs related to UNEP/MAP mandate and the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard must be encouraged to benefit both approaches. There is a need to identify and analyse international Best Practices to nurture the process, boost policy learning, and acknowledge the importance of the Science–Policy–Society Interface developed by Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC) in cooperation with the Union For Mediterranean (UfM) and UNEP/MAP Secretariats and Plan Bleu/RAC. This approach calls for an inclusive process undertaken to consult the scientific community, government representatives, policymakers and stakeholders on the findings of MARI.

22. UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system plays a significant role in the transition to sustainable development in the Mediterranean to address the interlinkages between the SDGs, including the integration of socio-economic components, climate action, and Gender and Youth issues at the national and sub-national levels. The MCSD, therefore, supports and assists the efforts of the Contracting Parties to incorporate sustainable development principles into their national strategies and implement them and provides a platform for monitoring purposes and peer learning.

II. Follow-up and Launch of MSSD Flagship Initiatives

23. The 19th Meeting of the MCSD also welcomed the presentations of the activities undertaken by MCSD Members and Observers, partners and the Secretariat under the MSSD Flagship Initiatives, noting with appreciation the advanced status of implementation of those initiatives, and acknowledged the efforts provided by MCSD Members and Observers, partners and the Secretariat in support to the promotion of the MSSD Flagship Initiatives, encouraging them to pursue such communication and capitalisation actions.

24. The status of implementation of crucial MSSD Flagship Initiatives was presented during the 24th MCSD Steering Committee meeting, namely:

- i. Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award;
- ii. WeMed Green Business Award;
- iii. Environmental Governance – Encourage the Accession to and Implementation of the Aarhus Convention on Public Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention);
- iv. Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Action Plan towards 2030;
- v. Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change.

25. The Flagship Info Document (UNEP/MED WG.560/Inf.4 provides more information on the progress of their implementation.
26. As advised by the MCSD Steering Committee, the Secretariat took measures to improve the publicity of the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award and the need to simplify the application process further to encourage more cities to apply.
27. The Istanbul Environment-Friendly City Award ‘Call for Application’ was made public for the first time in 2022. The process is supported by MedCities. The application deadline was extended until June 2023 to allow active participation and outreach.
28. On the WeMed Green Business Award, SCP/RAC- MedWaves undertook a number of activities considering that the contribution of the EU funded SWITCHMED project and this Award are very important to promote circular economy and and SCP and in implementing the MSSD.
29. On Environmental Governance and the Aarhus Convention, there is a need to encourage Contracting Parties, which are not yet party to join the Aarhus Convention. This aligns with MSSD indicator 27, “Number of countries that have clear mechanisms in place for ensuring public participation and guarantying public access to environmental information”, updated in 2023. www.wes-med.eu
30. Several activities were launched in 2020 by MIO-ECSDE, COMPSUD and MEPIELAN through the EU LIFE Programme and further strengthened in 2021 through the EU-funded Water and Environment Support (WES) in the ENI Neighborhood South Region project; as well as the regional assessment and online repository launched in 2021 by MIO-ECSDE, COMPSUD and UfMS through the EU-funded WES Regional Project www.wes-med.eu.
31. Regarding the *Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)* and Action Plan towards 2030, considering that it is the first such strategy adopted at regional level further funding is needed. There is also a need for data to populate the relevant Indicator 28 of the MSSD and to this aim MCSD members are invited to support the process.
32. As suggested by the MCSD Steering Committee, closer links with ocean literacy and education for climate change and more participation from young people were established. To this aim this MCSD meeting includes a session/event on education and youth to discuss achievements, opportunities and challenges. There is a need to increase the awareness of Ministries of Education on environment and sustainability.
33. Concerning *the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change*, work is ongoing on finalizing the three thematic reports related to specific challenges identified in the First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) : a) Special Report on coastal risks, b) Climate – water – energy – food – ecosystems nexus, c) Environmental change, conflicts, and human migration.

III. Updated MSSD: Process, Rationale and Evaluation

34. Under its Strategic Direction 7.2, the MSSD plans that the Strategy will be reviewed after ten years of implementation, taking into consideration global developments, towards a new Strategy to be defined by 2025: see MSSD Action 7.2.5 *Review the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (2023-2025), issuing a new Strategy for the period 2026-2035*.
35. As the initial MSSD (2005-2015), of which the deadline matched with the global Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), the MSSD 2016-2025 has also a ten-year timeline. Having started the same year as the SDGs (2016), the Strategy is expected to come to its end in 2025, namely at the end of the next biennium (2024-2025) and five years prior to the deadline of the 2030 Agenda.

36. At their 23rd Meeting, the Members of the MCSD Steering Committee brainstormed on the MSSD Review process, considering the regional (2025) and global (2030) milestones, in view of possibly aligning the regional process with the global one. The MCSD Steering Committee agreed on the uniqueness of the current MSSD 2016-2025, which has been developed in parallel and benefited of the preparation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, noting that important MAP assessment products can be mobilized in the context of the forthcoming MSSD Review process.

37. The 23rd and 24th MCSD Steering Committee meetings reviewed a number of options for the MSSD review process proposed by the Secretariat and concluded their overall preference towards the option of a parallel MSSD evaluation and its review in 2024-2025 biennium. To this aim, the Secretariat was requested to elaborate a detailed roadmap for further review by the 20th MCSD Meeting. This evaluation should take into account recent developments including the MED 2050 Foresight Study. A draft roadmap for the consideration of the 20th MCSD Meeting has been prepared and is presented in Annex II to the present document.

38. Two possible timelines are considered for the new cycle of the MSSD, i.e. 2026-2035 or 2026-2040 and submitted to the MCSD for its consideration.

IV. Gender Parity and Youth - An Opportunity for a Renewed Commitment in the Mediterranean Region

39. The MSSD Mid-Term Evaluation concluded in 2021 indicated that further work needs to be done as the five social goals related to Poverty (SDG1), Health (SDG 3), Education (SDG 4), Gender (SDG 5) and Inequality (SDG 10) are not fully stated as such in the MSSD Objectives. The situation remains particularly critical for SDG 2 on hunger, nutrition and sustainable agriculture, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 14 on life below water – which is most relevant to UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention – for which none of the Mediterranean countries is considered to be on track to reach the SDG targets by 2030.

40. Building on the high-level women's leadership dialogue organised by Türkiye in the margins of the COP 22 Ministerial Session, UNEP/MAP committed to renewing that experience. The Antalya Ministerial Declaration clearly states, for the first time, that the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols are committed to supporting gender mainstreaming and to considering women and youth as agents of change. The MCSD Meeting represents an opportunity to materialise those efforts.

41. A clear identification of SDG 5, "Gender equality" in the MSSD Post-2025, would add value to the new strategy and its further alignment with the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. Integration of additional indicators related to gender and youth in the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, including a sex-disaggregated approach for existing indicators.

42. Another window of opportunity to be mobilised under Flagship Initiatives is the second edition of the WeMed – Green Entrepreneurship Award, which is organised in cooperation with the *ENI CBC MED STAND Up! Project*, giving visibility to business models that promote sustainable production and consumption patterns in the textile and clothing sector, led by women (without age limit) and/or youth (up to 35 years old).

43. Expanding partnership, coordination and knowledge sharing with relevant UN agencies to facilitate gender and youth mainstreaming and transformation within the MCSD, i.e., IFAD, UN Woman, UNEP Gender Unit, UNDP Arab States Regional Hub – Gender Unit, etc., offers an added value opportunity for MCSD future work on Gender and Youth empowerment and participation. The integration of gender and youth in UNEP/MAP activities progressed during the last period.

44. The EU-funded project IMAP-MPA is addressing Gender Assessment within MPAs at the National and Regional level. The MED Programme has included a gender pillar for each of the Child Projects and is proceeding with capacity building at the regional and national levels. Similarly, gender-

sensitive risk assessments have been conducted in Montenegro (Kotor Bay) and in Morocco (Tanger - Tetouan - Al Hoceima area) in the frame of projects for adaptation to climate change led by PAP/RAC with support from Plan Bleu.

45. UNEP/MAP is currently implementing [its Gender Action Plan 2022-2023](#), which aims to: (i) Enhance knowledge of UNEP/MAP staff on gender equality both in relation to gender equality and environment linkages and in relation to UN and UNEP gender policies; (ii) Outline specific actions and related targets on how to reflect UNEP gender policies in the work of the UNEP/MAP, such as specific actions to further integrate gender considerations in meeting organisation, projects preparation and implementation; (iii) Establish a basis for monitoring how gender aspects are mainstreamed into the work of UNEP/MAP, including meeting organisation, projects preparation, E-Passes, implementation of Gender Parity Strategy of UNEP.

46. UNEP/MAP was targeted in 2021 and 2022 by a pilot Gender Audit led by the UNEP Gender and Safeguard Unit. It is the first MEA within the UNEP to be targeted by such an exercise. The positive results shared allowed for identifying potential opportunities to better mainstream gender within the UNEP/MAP. Recommendations were considered in implementing UNEP/MAP activities and preparing the upcoming PoW 2024-2025.

47. The Secretariat shared a presentation on gender, and the MAP Gender Action Plan at the 24th MCSD Steering Committee Meeting, which highlighted the importance of the gender perspective. It was highlighted the importance of having dedicated events on women and or youth in the MCSD meetings, either as a panel discussion or as a side event.

48. In the framework of the [MED 2050 project](#), Plan Bleu organised two workshops dedicated to involving young people from the Mediterranean Region in the MED 2050 foresight exercise and to pursue a collective reflection on the possible evolutions of the Mediterranean by 2050.

V. MED 2050 Foresight Study on the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean

Rationale for MED 2050

49. The Mediterranean region has evolved considerably over the past years: political upheavals, economic and social crises, Arab springs, growing migratory flows, tensions between riparian countries, significant effects of climate change, development and diversification of activities at sea, offshore exploitation, pressure on resources, etc. These transformations are most likely to become more pronounced between now and 2050, with severe consequences in terms of disruptions affecting the socio-economic and environmental balances of the region and very significant impacts on the sustainability of the Mediterranean development “model”.

50. The coming decades will then be decisive for resolving environmental and development issues facing the Mediterranean, seizing emerging opportunities and paving the way for a prosperous and peaceful region where people enjoy a good quality of life and where sustainable development occurs within carrying capacities of healthy ecosystems. The health crisis linked to the COVID-19 pandemic reminds us of the systemic nature of many long-term development issues and the lack of preparation of the countries in the face of the transformations underway.

51. The Mediterranean countries need more than ever common resilience incentives and tools to anticipate and adapt to the consequences of shocks to be equipped for current and future developments. Foresight is a suitable approach to shed light on these critical issues to promote sustainable development, greater inclusion, quality environmental services and enhanced resilience.

MED 2050 Methodological Approach and Timeframe

52. MED 2050 is an ambitious foresight exercise designed as an original science-policy interface, aiming at mobilising decision-makers and stakeholders from the North and South of the Mediterranean, going beyond geographical and institutional borders. As mandated by Decision IG.24/4 adopted at COP 21 and by Activity 6.1.1 of the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget for 2022-2023, the Secretariat (Plan Bleu) launched various activities to implement the revised roadmap for the MED 2050 foresight study.

53. MED 2050 is a participatory exercise; therefore, Plan Bleu structured the involvement of experts and representatives of MCSD Contracting Parties, as they were invited to identify interested national stakeholders to contribute to the MED 2050 network by getting involved via the MED 2050 platform and newsletter, and through participation in MED 2050 working groups, surveys or workshops.

54. In addition to the core MED 2050 programme, complementary 'Focus Projects' have been developed on specific issues to support partners by using the MED 2050 dynamics to identify and act upon their own priority areas of intervention.

55. The MED 2050 Foresight Study on the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean was developed through four key phases as follows: **Module 1- 2019 – 2021- Developing the Foresight Base:** Following the approval of the MED 2050 roadmap, the first Module enables the construction of the foresight base and the institutionalization of the exercise. This phase aimed at constituting a basis for analysing the Mediterranean system by preliminarily exploring the trends, disruptions and weak signals specific to it and prioritizing the challenges (risks or opportunities) for the environment and sustainable development within the 2030-2050 timeframe. Plan Bleu prepared factsheets on 36 variables covering the whole spectrum of sustainable development in the Mediterranean region and produced several MED 2050 outputs and publications, including analysis and qualification of trends and disruptions for the future of the Mediterranean. These factsheets are available on the MED 2050 web platform.

56. **Module 2 and 3 - 2021-2022- Actor engagement, and Development of the Scenarios:** Module 2 engages different actors and stakeholders through interviews and workshops to collect contrasting visions of the future of development and the environment in the Mediterranean by 2050. This then allows the development of six contrasted scenarios. These macro-scenarios represent a milestone outcome of the MED 2050 project. **Module 4- 2022 – 2023- Elaboration of the Transition Pathways:** This phase compares and reflects on possible transition paths towards the sustainable development of the Mediterranean, based on the six scenarios developed in Module 3.

57. MED 2050 developed these six scenarios describing possible futures for the Mediterranean and transitions paths: Scenario 1: Inertia, pragmatism and marginalisation of the Mediterranean; Scenario 2: Colliding of crises and forced adaptations; Scenario 3: Growth at all costs in a fragmented Mediterranean; Scenario 4: Euro-Mediterranean partnership for a blue-green transition; Scenario 5: Another specifically Mediterranean sustainable development model; and Scenario 6: The Mediterranean Sea: a global common good.

58. During the 24th MCSD Steering Committee Meeting, it was concluded that the six scenarios provide pieces of a mosaic of the possible future in the region. The 24th MCSD Steering Committee asked Plan Bleu/RAC to consider comments expressed by its Members and ensure that the fully-fledged scenarios are timely shared with the MCSD Members for review and consultation with their networks.

59. The MED 2050 Steering Committee met on 26th April 2023 and agreed that a briefing "progress report," including a pitch of each of the six scenarios, supporting tables, and presentation, will be prepared for Plan Bleu/RAC Focal Points Meeting and the 20th Meeting of the MCSD. The MED 2050 Steering Committee also agreed to start disseminating the messages from the scenarios when opportunities arise starting July 2023, and to conduct a stand-alone workshop on MED 2050 in Tunisia around mid-September 2023, including in a geographical balanced manner working group members and representatives of key partners. The goal is to enrich the scenarios and even more importantly, to allow inputs from partners and stakeholders in the collective thinking about the transition pathways. The

ANIMA network made a first suggestion by inviting for a MED 2050 presentation and debate with their network, during their General Assembly (Cyprus, 10-12 July 2023). MCSD members are encouraged to provide suggestions for such opportunities.

60. A full report on MED 2050 will be available by mid-October, including methodology, all scenarios, and a first draft of transition pathways/recommendations, for inclusion in the COP23 package. A "post-COP" final version to include feedback from COP23 will be available early 2024.

Dissemination of results, communication, knowledge sharing and capacity building

61. The initial mandate by Contracting Parties, the 2019 Meeting of Plan Bleu Focal Points (Marseille, France, 28-29 May 2019) and the 18th Meeting of the MCSD (Budva, Montenegro, 11-13 June 2021) emphasised the importance of developing communication products adapted to a broad audience, including youth. The different productions of the programme are constantly presented and discussed with the various bodies of the MAP system, uploaded on the Med2050 platform (www.med2050.org) and disseminated to a large audience as the programme moves on.

62. The intermediate and final reports were discussed by relevant MAP bodies throughout the programme deployment and presented to COP 22 in 2021. The final outputs will be presented at COP 23 in 2023. MED 2050 will thus contribute to the visibility of the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system. The results of MED 2050 will help prepare upcoming strategic documents, including, for instance, the MSSD Review and preparation of the next Strategy 2026-2035.

63. A workshop entitled “Youth Commission for the Future of the Mediterranean” (Online, 2 March 2022) was organized by Plan Bleu/RAC to collect contrasted visions of the Mediterranean in 2050 from young people living in twenty-two countries around the Mediterranean. This workshop allowed the participants to express their perceptions of potential futures on the transformations of lifestyles and the role of public actors, emphasizing what seemed to them desirable or, on the contrary, unacceptable for the future of the Mediterranean by 2050.

64. Plan Bleu/RAC organised, in collaboration with the Anna Lindh Foundation and the Direction interministérielle à la Méditerranée (DiMed, France), a workshop gathering thirty young people from the East Mediterranean region (22-23 February 2023, Alexandria, Egypt). The goal of this workshop was to involve young people from this region in the MED 2050 foresight exercise and to pursue a collective reflection on the possible evolutions of the Mediterranean by 2050. The workshop aimed to elaborate on the first drafts of the 6 scenarios and co-construct solid and grounded transition paths towards common sustainable development goals in the Mediterranean region by 2050. The workshop brought together young people aged 20 to 30 from different professional backgrounds (journalists, students, engineers, marine biologists, etc.) from a number of the southern Mediterranean countries. Conducted in a format that facilitated young people’s appropriation of the exercise, the workshop elicited numerous reactions from the participants to the scenarios being developed. It thus allowed for a diversification of points of view with the objective of co-construction of alternative ideas for a desirable future in the Mediterranean, based on the sharing of concrete examples from the plurality of their personal experiences of life, informed by the MED 2050 six scenarios, and reflecting on transition paths.

65. The network’s capitalisation, consultation and setting up will be continued throughout the programme's implementation to take advantage of new developments and ensure ongoing dialogue across interested parties. The web platform and newsletter will also be mobilised as a strategic tool to disseminate MED 2050 results, through newsletters and thematic leaflets, among other products. During the 24th MCSD Steering Committee Meeting, the participants highlighted the importance of establishing partnerships with southern Mediterranean stakeholders to discuss the MED 2050 Foresight Study and noted that the MCSD Steering Committee members may be involved as early as possible to support this process.

VI. Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean in the Context of Global and Regional Commitments

66. In coordination with EC Directorate General for the Environment (DG ENV) and with the UNEP Liaison Office to the European Union, the Secretariat has initiated cooperating also with the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fishery (DG MARE) as well as with the Directorate General for Regional and Urban policies (DG REGIO).

67. The Secretariat, as Observer of the WestMed Initiative Steering Committee, has actively contributed to the WestMed Ministerial Declaration that will be endorsed on 23 June 2023 in Malta, highlighting the cooperation to be developed with the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, as complementary framework.

68. In the same line the Secretariat has discussed with DG REGIO a reinforced cooperation with the Ionian Adriatic macro regional strategy (EUSAIR) and its two pillars on blue economy and environment as well as in the framework of a potential future macro regional strategy covering the whole Mediterranean.

69. In parallel, the Secretariat has had bilateral meetings both with the Union for the Mediterranean as well as with the Agence française de développement (AFD) to cooperate in the framework of the Blue Mediterranean Partnership and its Blue Economy Fund, the new multi donor instrument, led by the EU and donors' countries for investments on Blue Economy in the non-EU MED area. There will be a pledging conference in July in Spain (coinciding with the Spanish Presidency of the EU Council).

70. Finally, the Secretariat has accepted the invitation to become member of the Overarching Steering Committee (SC) of the BlueMissionMed project supporting the Mediterranean sea basin for the implementation of the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters and financed by DG Research and Innovation (DG RTD).

71. The Secretariat participated in the UNEP Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) Coordination Group meetings, established in May 2020 by the Marine and Fresh Water Branch, UNEP Ecosystems Division. Working with Regional Seas and other partners, the SBE Coordination Group supports the development of UNEP's SBE work, coordination, integration and synthesis of work streams, consolidation and communication of results across UNEP. The SBE Coordination Group supports the UNEP's Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative, which aims to facilitate sustainable ocean-based economic, social and environmental benefits. An essential focus of the initiative is to support UNEP's strategic response to COVID-19, building a recovery that uses oceans within a safe operating space of the planet for humanity. It helps deliver the Paris Agreement on climate change.

72. As of October 2022, the Plan of Action for a Model Mediterranean Sea (PAMEx) has been supporting increased resource mobilization for nature and climate, bringing its partners closer together around common heightened ambitions for sustainable development in the region and giving further visibility to its actions. Efforts have been channeled to launch PAMEx Local Investment Finance Facility (PLIFF) and develop a portfolio of projects aligned with the Barcelona Convention. A first portfolio of projects for the greening of Mediterranean ports has been implemented since early 2023 and projects proposals for nature-based solutions and the fight against pollution are currently discussed. With the support of its Technical Secretariat at UNEP MAP, PAMEx partners have also tightened their coordination agreeing on shared priorities over its first Steering Committee meeting gathering them in person for the first time on 24-25 January 2023 in Athens, Greece. The next committee will be held on 11 July 2023, online. The platform initiative has also facilitated synergies among partners promoting the Mediterranean ambitions for nature and climate across multiple global (UNFCCC COP27, CBD COP15, IMPAC5, etc.) and regional events (First Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships 2022-2031, Forum Méditerranée du Futur, Post 2020 SAPBIO Donors Conference, etc). PAMEx has also facilitated a common declaration to scale-up funding for Marine Protected Areas and a common Mediterranean

position for the Global Treaty on Plastic. It will organize side-events on the margins of the INC-2 on a global plastic treaty on 31 May 2023 and over the 20th Meeting of the MCSD. More information are available on: <https://www.unep.org/unepmap/Partnerships/PAMEx>

73. The official publication of the report “A Circular Blue Economy for the Mediterranean: Current Practices and Opportunities” which is the result of a joint initiative of the SwitchMed initiative (SCP/RAC) and the Interreg Med Blue Growth Community (Plan Bleu and Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions/CPMR) was officially presented, on the occasion of the conference “Fostering Circular Blue Economy in the Mediterranean” (10 May 2022, Barcelona, Spain), a joint conference to share the main findings/recommendations and foster implementation.

74. On 13 April 2023, in the framework of the event "Escale à Sète", an international maritime festival (12-18 April 2022, Port of Sète, France), Plan Bleu/RAC in collaboration with the PSAMIDES project and the Interreg Blue Growth Community, organised the event "Greening of the cruise and leisure boating sectors in the Mediterranean" with about 100 participants from 15 Mediterranean countries. It was the official release of the Guidelines for the Sustainability of Cruising and Recreational Boating in the Mediterranean Region. A participatory approach was favoured for its drafting through the creation of a multi-stakeholder group which gathered more than 100 Mediterranean stakeholders (representatives of port authorities, cruise industry representatives, local authorities, researchers, nautical industry, environmental associations, tourism observatories, MPA managers, consultants). These guidelines provide targeted information on sustainability objectives and sustainable practices for the cruise and leisure boating sectors and aim to support the main actors involved in promoting the long-term transition of both sectors towards sustainability.

75. At the 3rd and final annual meeting of the Interreg Blue Growth Community (14 June 2022, Kotor, Montenegro), Plan Bleu/RAC officially released the Sustainability Report on Marine Renewable Energy in the Mediterranean.

76. Findings on Blue Economy and Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean were disseminated by Plan Bleu/RAC during the Forum des Mondes Méditerranéens (Marseille, France, 7-8 February 2022) and through an author paper part of a dedicated publication by World Resources Institute feeding in the UN Ocean Summit (Lisbon, 27 June - 1 July 2022).

77. Plan Bleu/RAC and SCP/RAC-MedWaves co-organised the Med Forum on the blue economy (10-11 May 2022, Barcelona, Spain) and, in the framework of the Interreg Med Sustainable Tourism Community (STC), the II Med Sustainable Tourism Convention (8-9 June 2022) with more than 150 representatives of tourism management at state, regional and local level from eleven Mediterranean countries, speakers from the world of academia and research and other European projects but also organisations such as at DG GROW (Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs) of the European Commission and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Plan Bleu also published a Catalogue on Best Practices on Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean Region to showcase concrete examples and good practices which have been successfully incorporated into policies (either at the local, regional or state level) in the Mediterranean with concrete results, as well as a “State of Play of the Tourism in the Mediterranean”. Follow-up work will continue from 2023 to 2029 in the framework of a new Interreg EuroMed project Community for Tourism (C4T).

78. Plan Bleu/RAC contributed with an expert essay on "Vision Setting: A Sustainable Coastal and Marine Tourism Sector in 2030 and 2050" to the "40 Expert Perspectives on the future of coastal and marine tourism" that gather and showcase a wide range of perspectives on the future of coastal and marine tourism based on emerging themes and issues selected by the 16 members of the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy. These perspectives accompany the report on “Opportunities for Transforming Coastal and Marine Tourism: Towards Sustainability, Regeneration and Resilience”. Both documents were presented on 29 June 2022, as part of the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, Portugal, during the Launch of the Sustainable coastal and marine tourism knowledge platform and the Official

UNOC Side Event: Building Sustainable and Resilience Ocean Tourism Economies and Coastal Cities on 1 July 2023.

79. In the framework of the UNECE Ninth Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (5-7 October 2022, Nicosia, Cyprus), UNEP/MAP and Plan Bleu/RAC participated in the side event entitled “Tourism and circularity for Sustainable development in the Mediterranean”. At the conclusion of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, delegates adopted a Ministerial Declaration, recognizing the urgent need to ensure the tourism sector “builds back better” from the impacts of the pandemic.

80. On November 11, 2022, Plan Bleu/RAC participated on a hybrid conference “Tourism climate action plans in the Mediterranean: a vision for the future” in the framework of the UNFCCC COP27 to discuss with European policy makers and representatives of international organisations and local authorities the potential of tourism sector can adapt to climate change and mitigate its negative consequences on Mediterranean environment and communities.

81. On 15 November 2022, Plan Bleu/RAC participated in the launch day of the Green Horizonte Festival in Calvi (Corsica) to present the activities concerning sustainable tourism and on 19 December 2022, an online seminar was organised on “The Interreg Med Sustainable Tourism Community: Success stories of cooperation and best practices. Future opportunities for Sustainable Tourism in North Macedonia”.

82. In partnership with “Hautes Etudes Commerciales” (HEC), a major post-graduate school in France, Plan Bleu/RAC is working on a study on the benefits of Digitalisation in the context of the blue economy to be published in 2023.

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

83. The Secretariat prepared a working document (WG.560/9) to support the 20th MCSD Meeting in providing recommendation recommendations on the overall UNEP/MAP Programme of Work (PoW) 2024-2025, aiming to integrate sustainability considerations into the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system as a whole. It includes the following sections: A brief analysis of the sustainability dimension of the draft UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2027; an analysis of the sustainability dimension of the draft PoW for 2024-2025; and a proposal for undertaking a consultation for the preparation of the draft Ministerial Declaration of the next 23rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 23).

84. 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 (e.g. resilient and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 health and socio-economic crisis through greater enforcement and acceleration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a blueprint for sustainability in the Mediterranean region), including the way forward in terms of possible commitments and outreach.

VIII. MCSD Membership

85. *Decision IG.22/17* contains the constitutive documents and rules of procedure, including the mandate and membership of the MCSD..COP 22, through Decision 25/3 on Governance endorsed the MCSD’s recommendation to adjust paragraph 9.II. of the MCSD Composition in the MCSD Constitutive Documents (Decision IG.22/17), so that the mandate of the MCSD Members under the group of parliamentarians may be renewable for more than one additional term taking into consideration the need for rotation and for geographical balance to the extent possible, and requested the Secretariat to reflect this amendment in the MCSD Constitutive Documents (Decision IG.22/17).

86. The list of Non-Contracting Party membership of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), approved by the 19th Meeting of the MCSD and agreed by COP 22 is reproduced in Annex I to the present document. There is no expiry for MCSD members in this biennium; so the members of the MCSD remain the same for biennium 2024-2025, as they were for biennium 2022-2023.

IX. Cooperation and Partners; Outreach and Communication

87. In the period from June 2021-May 2023, 50 news items, including web stories, articles and press releases, were published in the news section of the UNEP/MAP website. By providing updates on the Secretariat's work and on progress achieved by Contracting Parties in several fields, including the implementation of projects and COP decisions, these news items also deployed the UNEP/MAP narrative on key themes, including the Mediterranean region's response to the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and conveyed advocacy messages—such as the imperative of accelerating the implementation of commitments under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

88. The latest web stories published on the UNEP/MAP website address topical themes, including gender-sensitive assessments of climate resilience in the context of the MedProgramme, PAMEx and its Local Investment Finance Facility (PLIFF), the MedProgramme intervention to address mercury pollution in Bosnia and Herzegovina and biodiversity protection in the wake of the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. A press release announcing the formal adoption of Med SOx ECA by IMO and titled "The Mediterranean reaches a historic milestone in the regional endeavour for greener shipping" was issued (in English and French) on 16 December 2022.

89. The core pages of the UNEP/MAP website are now available in English, French and Arabic as part of the Secretariat's continuous efforts to advance multilingualism. Additions to the core content include new pages on PAMEx, the WeMed Award and the UNEP/MAP approach to gender equality.

90. COP 22 highlights are accessible from a dedicated page on the website: <https://bit.ly/BC-COP22>. The meeting received significant coverage, notably by Turkey-based media outlets. Media coverage in the meeting venue was arranged with the COP 22 Host Country in line with the UN media accreditation procedure. The Coordinating Unit issued two press releases (with the MAP Communication Taskforce providing support on translation and dissemination to national media outlets). A media encounter with representatives of Agence France Presse (AFP), BBC Turkey and TRT World was arranged on 10 December 2021 in Antalya. An AFP dispatch on Med SOx ECA, quoting the MAP Coordinator, was picked up widely by pan-Mediterranean media, including France 24: <https://bit.ly/3s83ggU>

91. During the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 April 2023, the UNEP/MAP website saw 365,219 page views from 118,257 users who made 23,195 downloads. In addition to the About us pages, the factsheets on "pollution" and "climate change" feature in the top five most viewed pages with 13,713 views and 11,490 views respectively.

92. The following of the UNEP/MAP twitter account (created in October 2019) continued to grow, passing the symbolic milestone of 2,000 followers. By securing a digital presence on Twitter for the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system, the account is not only boosting institutional visibility, but also enabling new forms of digital engagement with regional actors and stakeholders, including MAP Partners and MCSD members.

93. To boost the UNEP/MAP digital presence, the Coordinating Unit launched in February 2022 a [new page](#) offering updates to representatives of the Contracting Party, members of Governing Bodies and MAP Partners on LinkedIn-- a social media platform popular with practitioners in the field of environment and sustainable development in the Mediterranean region. 1,425 LinkedIn users followed the page in its first year.

94. INFO/RAC strengthened MAP's presence on Twitter by adopting new communication tools such as Twitter cards. Particular attention was given to disseminating information on the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of the necessary transition towards a more sustainable and resilient future in the post-COVID context.

95. In line with the MAP Operational Communication Strategy, the UNEP/MAP digital presence built on coordinated communication by the MAP Communication Taskforce across social platforms (including Facebook) through the consistent use of hashtags (#BarcelonaConvention and #Act4Med) on all platforms. Consistent messaging and the use of relevant hashtags establish linkages between activities that MAP Components publicize through their own social media accounts in the spirit of “communicating as one”, a principle enshrined in the MAP Communication Strategy. **UNEP/MAP does not pay for any content sponsoring scheme on social media and growth is exclusively organic.**

96. The digital campaign organized by UNEP/MAP with support from the MAP communication taskforce secured visibility for the 2022 edition of Mediterranean Coast Day with several institutional partners and individuals sharing the material and messages prepared with the support of INFO/RAC, which provided support on graphic design and was instrumental in the delivery of an updated website dedicated to this regional observance: <https://bit.ly/Med-Coast-Day2022>. Evidence of engagement is provided using the #MedCoastDay hashtag on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/hashtag/MedCoastDay>) and other platforms.

97. The “Young Person’s Guide to the Mediterranean Action Plan and the Barcelona Convention”, produced by the Coordinating Unit’s communication team, was released on 8 February 2022. The Guide offers a simplified introduction to the legal framework that UNEP/MAP and the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention have established and gradually upgraded, covering a wide range of themes pertaining to the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment as well as sustainable development. This communication product and outreach tool is aimed at MAP Partners, ocean literacy practitioners, educators and young readers aged 11-17 in the Mediterranean region and beyond: <https://bit.ly/334k92q>. The “Young Person’s Guide to the Mediterranean Action Plan and the Barcelona Convention”, has been translated into Italian by INFO/RAC, and served as an outreach product at the Festival of Mediterranean Citizens (2-5 June 2022, Catania, Italy). The publication will also be made available in Arabic during the 2022-2023 biennium.

98. The Coordinating Unit has released a new video presentation of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system marking the 45th anniversary of the Barcelona Convention: <https://bit.ly/3JVMDfy>.

99. The MedProgramme has developed a visual brand and initiated communication on activities implemented in the field, including a recent web story on addressing mercury pollution in a beneficiary site in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Progress is being made on the development of a Knowledge Management Platform that will capture lessons learned and knowledge products generated by the MedProgramme.

100. The Coordinating Unit delivered a suite of communication products for the EU-funded projects being implemented by UNEP/MAP, including a video clip (<https://youtu.be/oTdQIID-8B0>) and a brochure titled "Bright spots in the Mediterranean" (<https://bit.ly/BrightSpotsMed>). The brochure is offered in the four official languages. Both products are accessible from the project pages on the UNEP/MAP website and have been disseminated widely with the support of the Regional Activity Centres. The EU-funded projects have also benefited from other forms of communication support, including web stories (example: <https://bit.ly/3PJZcMo>) and topical posts on social media. A similar effort is being undertaken in support of the MedProgramme’s work programme on communication (Example: <https://bit.ly/3D3JYPv>).

101. An ongoing collaboration with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) will deliver “The Parliamentarian's Guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast”, which has been approved by the UNEP Publications Committee for publication during the 2022-2023 biennium. PAM is providing substantive input and undertaking a survey aimed at members of its regional network. The

Guide will serve as a practical handbook for parliamentarians around the Mediterranean, harnessing their role for a greater implementation of, and compliance with, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. This publication will be launched in December 2023 on the sidelines of COP 23.

102. In addition to the press releases issued during the period under review, the Coordinating Unit initiated a Small-Scale Funding Agreement (SSFA) with Association Africa 21, a network of African journalists. The Implementing Partner of the SSFA has developed three briefing notes (in Arabic and French) for journalists operating in North Africa and organized a webinar that addressed the need for environmental journalists to acquaint themselves with the mandate of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system. The webinar, which saw the participation of media professionals, scholars and journalism students, also saw a discussion on options for the mainstreaming of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols into journalism curricula in Maghreb countries. Additional information, the briefing notes and the webinar recording are [available on the Africa 21 website](#). All the deliverables were produced for journalists by Africa 21 experts, with the Coordinating Unit providing backstopping and background material. The products are fully owned by the media network and will serve as assets for future reporting on the Barcelona Convention's implementation in North African countries.

103. UNEP/MAP took part in important gatherings to advocate for swifter action on the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols as the shortest path to securing a resilient and sustainable future in the Mediterranean region:

- The 2022 UN Ocean Conference (27 June-1 July 2022), where three side-events were organized/co-organized by UNEP/MAP with several contributions from MAP Partners: <https://bit.ly/Med-UNOC22>. UNEP/MAP conveyed the voice of the Mediterranean, and shared lessons learned from almost five decades of multilateral ocean governance, including on issues pertaining to plastic pollution where significant progress has been made on the normative front. The side-events addressed important elements of the regional response to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.
- The UNECE Ninth Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, Cyprus, 5-7 October 2022), where UNEP/MAP joined forces with several MAP Partners, including MIO-ECSDE, to promote sustainable tourism and advance ocean literacy: <https://bit.ly/MAP-EfE>. The Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean, a flagship initiative of the MSSD, has been adopted at the Conference. Ministers and representatives of Mediterranean countries (Italy, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, and Spain) delivered supporting statements, some of them making references to the work of the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, including the MCSD. The UNEP/MAP Coordinator also participated, as speaker, in the High-Level Event on the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD) and its Action Plan towards 2030, as well as side events organized by partners on marine litter; ocean literacy; public participation and the Mediterranean accession agenda to the Aarhus Convention.
- The Mediterranean Pavilion at UNFCCC COP 27 (6-18 November 2022, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt). The MedPavilion was the first of its kind to be set up at a UN Climate Change Conference. This was an initiative led by UfM together with UNEP/MAP and the PRIMA Foundation, along with a coalition of institutions dealing with climate action in the region. The Secretariat issued a media advisory (dated 13 September 2022) presenting the rationale and the purpose of the participation in the Mediterranean Pavilion in COP 27 of UNFCCC: <https://bit.ly/MedPavilion>

104. During the period under review, communication and outreach activities took place around key MAP observances:

- i. The Coordinating Unit and SPA/RAC organized, in collaboration with the Pelagos Agreement Permanent Secretariat, the first-ever edition of the SPAMI Day (20 May 2022). This effort included a digital campaign launched on 15 April 2022 on the web and social media under the slogan “Together to protect the Mediterranean biodiversity”, followed by a special event celebrating the SPAMIs as a cooperation tool for biodiversity conservation in the Mediterranean (Oceanographic Museum of Monaco, 20 May 2022).
- ii. The digital campaign organized by UNEP/MAP with support from the MAP communication taskforce secured visibility for the 2022 edition of Mediterranean Coast Day with several institutional partners and individuals sharing the material and messages prepared with the support of INFO/RAC, which provided support on graphic design and was instrumental in the delivery of an updated website dedicated to this regional observance: <https://bit.ly/Med-Coast-Day2022>. Evidence of engagement is provided by the use of the #MedCoastDay hashtag on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/hashtag/MedCoastDay>) and other platforms.

105. Several communication and capacity-building activities on the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment took place as part of the implementation of the MedProgramme Gender Mainstreaming Strategy. A blogpost was published on the website of UNEP/MAP and a memo was sent to all the RACs on International Women’s Day in March 2022. A web story published on 8 March 2023 offered insights on climate change vulnerability through the gender lens.

106. The Secretariat is mulling the launch of a large-scale campaign celebrating 50 years of regional cooperation, achievements and progress (MAP at 50 (1975-2025), including in the context of the UN Ocean Conference to be held in Nice, France, in June 2025. More information on this campaign, which will require the involvement of the entire MAP-Barcelona Convention system, MAP Partners and MCS D members, will be provided at a later stage.

107. In the area of award promotion, the Coordinating Unit and INFO/RAC supported the promotion of the "Istanbul Environment-Friendly City Award for Mediterranean coastal cities", which recognizes and rewards the efforts of local authorities to improve the environment and quality of life and promote sustainable development in the Mediterranean coastal cities.

108. As part of the production and dissemination of news and communication materials, INFO/RAC produced the quarterly online newsletter MEDNEWS which updates the progress of MAP, ongoing initiatives and projects and provides an overview of actions to safeguard the Mediterranean.

109. INFO/RAC provided communication support to several MAP activities, including CAMP Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Centre developed the Communication Plan in the framework of the UNEP/MAP Agreement with the Ministry of Ecological Transition of Italy. The implementation of the latter included the production of a communicative booklet highlighting the importance of the agreement as best practice in the Mediterranean, and a promotional video showcasing the results achieved through the bilateral agreement.

Plan Bleu/RAC initiated a series of thematic webinars called "Rendez-Vous du Plan Bleu" to inform the general public of its main activities.

Following a youth event that was held in Istanbul in November 2021 in preparation for the COP 22 meeting, three youth representatives joined the ministerial session of the COP 22 as a renewable commitment by the Contracting Parties towards facilitating an active role for youth in all decision-making processes relating to the future of the Mediterranean region. In their presentation, the youth representatives recalled the outcomes of the youth event held on the eve of COP 22 and shared three recommendations for the Contracting Parties to strengthen the Mediterranean Action Plan:

- meet the growing demand for funding and human resources in research and development connected to marine governance;

- establish a youth exchange programme between northern and southern Mediterranean States to facilitate the exchange of ideas and to support community-building;
- establish a permanent council of Mediterranean youth that would convene biennially.

110. Similarly, several dedicated initiatives by Plan Bleu/RAC allowed the involvement of youth representatives in the Med2050 Foresight study. Events such as the youth workshop held in Alexandria in February 2023 acknowledge the essential role that Youth play in shaping a sustainable future in the Mediterranean.

111. In April 2023, the Secretariat met with the President of the Republic of Slovenia and the Minister of Environment and Planning to discuss the preparations of COP 23, and especially its high-level segment. It was agreed that the meeting will, *inter alia*, focus on gender and the President of Slovenia will lead the planned event on Women Leaders of the Mediterranean. Furthermore, importance will be placed on Youth and Education, including possibly through panel participation and/or a youth event.

112. The Secretariat is in close collaboration with the Government of Greece for the preparation of the 2024 Our Ocean Conference to take place in Athens. A dedicated activity will be added in this respect in the UNEP/MAP PoW and Budget 2024-2025.

113. Collaboration with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) is proceeding well. Both Secretariats have significantly increased their interaction, exchange of information, expert knowledge, and cooperation on topics of common concern, including on marine litter, having in the spotlight a healthy Mediterranean including for its living resources. The UNEP/MAP Coordinator has sent a letter on 4 October 2022 to the GFCM Executive Secretary *Ad Interim*, focusing on a number of priority issues that require action from both sides, particularly for the successful development of the 2023 MED QSR, including the development of Ecological Objectives (EOs) EO4 (marine food webs) and EO6 (seafloor integrity) into operational objectives with indicators and target levels. Collaboration with GFCM also continues in the context of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fishery Bodies. The last meeting of this initiative took place in Busan, Republic of Korea, on 25-28 October 2022.

114. The strengthening of collaboration with UfMS continued beyond the MedPavilion of COP 27 of UNFCCC. The UNEP/MAP Coordinator had on 21 October 2022 a bilateral meeting with the Senior Deputy Secretary General of UfM for Energy and Climate Action, Mr. Grammenos Mastrojeni, in Athens, Greece, to discuss the preparations for a strong Mediterranean presence in COP 27 of UNFCCC, as well as possibilities for further collaborations between the two organizations in relation to Climate Change. Furthermore, a meeting is being organized for the beginning of November 2022 in Athens, Greece, between the UNEP/MAP Coordinator and the new Deputy Secretary General of UfM for Water, Environment and Blue Economy, Mr. Almotaz Abadi, to discuss issues of common interest, including current activities on the implementation of the MoU, the possible update of the Areas of Cooperation of the MoU, major upcoming meetings and events of joint interest, as well as ways to strengthen cooperation in the near future. The Senior Management of UNEP/MAP and Senior Management of UfM Secretariat met on 30th March 2023 to enhance cooperation between UfM and UNEP/MAP, and notably through the extension of the existing MoU.

115. Following a bilateral meeting in 2023, there is growing interest for collaboration with OECD, who is expanding its outreach to non-OECD members through its External Committee, which addresses the MENA region relevant to the Mediterranean. It is also increasingly integrating the issue of Oceans, as the item is spanning across several directorates of the organization (Environment directorate; Trade directorate; Agriculture, Fisheries; Science, Technology and Innovation directorate). A sustainable ocean initiative set up in 2019 mapped out ocean-related work across the house including country diagnostic on oceans, country programs with a green growth strategy review in Egypt and Morocco focused on climate issues rather than the ocean though, a plastic report issued in 2022 (Environment Directorate), a study on IUU fishing (Trade Directorate) and work on data beyond the OECD countries with the PINE database with 130 countries. In relation to the MSSD, OECD could support MAP in designing an ambitious new

MSSD. It could support it with general statistic and data to make the environmental and economic dimension converge. Furthermore, there is a lot of interest to collaborate with EPR processes. MSSD implementation peer review could integrate contributions from OECD green growth strategy reviews in Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention and UNEP MAP can also contribute to this.

Annex I

Composition of the MCSD for June 2021 – June 2023, Non-Contracting Party Members

Composition of the MCSD for June 2021 – June 2023, Non-Contracting Party Members**The Local Authorities Group:**

- The Agence des Villes et Territoires méditerranéens durables (AVITEM – 2nd mandate),
- The Forum of Adriatic and Ionian cities (FAIC – 2nd mandate), and
- The Mediterranean Cities Network (Med Cities)

The Socio-Economic Stakeholders Group:

- The Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME – 2nd mandate),
- The Economic and Social Council of Greece (ESCG – 2nd mandate), and
- The Fondation Mohammed VI pour la protection de l'environnement,
- ANIMA Investment Network

The Non-Governmental Organizations Group:

- ECO UNION (2nd mandate), the Egyptian Sustainable Development Forum (ESDF – 2nd mandate),
- The Network of Marine Protected Areas managers in the Mediterranean (MedPAN – 2nd mandate), and
- The Egyptian Sustainable Development Forum (ESDF – 2nd mandate)

The Scientific Community Group:

- The Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC),
- The Centre International de Droit Comparé de l'Environnement (CIDCE), and
- Dr Fatima Driouech (Vice-Chair of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group University Polytechnic Mohammed VI, Morocco),
- The *Forum Euroméditerranéen des Instituts de Sciences Economiques* (FEMISE)?
- The Mediterranean Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN Med) ?
- The Mediterranean Programme for International Environmental Law and Negotiation (MEPIELAN)?

The Intergovernmental Organizations Group:

- The Arab Forum for the Environment and Development (AFED – 2nd mandate),
- The Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med – 2nd mandate), and
- The Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN-Med),
- The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)?

Parliamentarians:

- The Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development (COMPSUD),
- The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), and
- The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (PA OSCE).

Annex II

Proposed Roadmap for the update of the MSSD Review Process

Draft roadmap for the MSSD final evaluation (2024-2025)

- The MSSD final evaluation will be designed through existing methodologies (including UNEP ones) to inform on (i) the state of the sustainability in the Mediterranean, based on MAP assessment studies and data available in international/UN databases (desktop analysis) and (ii) achievements and gaps regarding the strategy's implementation. The effectiveness of the MSSD should be also assessed.
- The MSSD final evaluation should be based on quantitative and qualitative criteria, considering the MSSD indicators and target and taking advantage of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and MAP assessment studies (SoED, MED 2050, 2023 MEDQSR, MEDECC reports), capitalizing on the implementation of MSSD Flagship Initiatives, and collecting inputs from MCSD Members, MAP Partners, MAP Components, and other stakeholders and partners.
- The MSSD final evaluation should inform the MSSD Review process, e.g., identification of priority issues and emerging challenges (Covid-19 pandemic, energy crisis, food security, etc.).
- The MCSD, through its Steering Committee, should have a leading role for the participatory component of the MSSD final evaluation. The "self-assessment" component of the MSSD final evaluation should be based on UNEP/MAP bodies' and partners' consultations, through questionnaires, interviews and workshops, mobilizing relevant communication channels within the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system.
- The MSSD final evaluation may focus in priority on flagship initiatives', strategic directions' and regional actions' implementation, as well as on the level of achievements of the MSSD targets through the dedicated indicators. The national dimension should be mainly based on best available practices and success stories, as a source of inspiration for other countries – keeping in mind the role of the MCSD in terms of experience sharing and peer learning.
- The results of the MSSD final evaluation will be submitted to COP 24 at the end of 2025, with a proposed roadmap for feed the MSSD Review process, which will take place almost in parallel, with an adequate time lag to allow the two processes to effectively interact:

Phase I (February-September 2024): Prepare and support the launch of the MSSD final evaluation

- Develop the organizational set-up and prepare a detailed work plan.
- Develop a relevant methodology (based on existing approaches) and design a relevant consultation process.
- Identify relevant sources of information and a list of stakeholders to be consulted.
- Collect evidence and materials on SDGs and MSSD implementation in the Mediterranean (success stories, good practices, and challenges) (i) within the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, including best practices/experiences and obstacles/gaps, at regional and national levels, and (ii) beyond (literature review).
- Undertake a gap analysis of the MSSD/SDGs implementation in the Mediterranean.
- Review the collected evidence and materials and prepare a consultation document that may consist of the first annotated table of contents of the MSSD evaluation report, taking also into account the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard/MSSD indicators and targets.

Phase II (May-December 2024): Conduct the MSSD final evaluation under the guidance of the MCSD Steering Committee

- Support the launch and manage the consultation process (e.g. questionnaires, interviews, webinars) based on the consultation document, and review comments and inputs received from that process, addressing MSSD regional actions and flagship initiatives, as well as national case studies/success stories.
- Prepare the final report and its summary for decision-makers, including recommendations towards the MSSD Review process.

Phase III (January-September 2025): Finalize the MSSD evaluation towards submission for approval

- Review of the draft reports by relevant MAP bodies (MCSD Steering Committee, Plan Bleu Focal Points) towards discussion at the 21st Meeting of the MCSD (June/July 2025).
- Review final reports of the MSSD final evaluation and its summary for decision-makers (synthesis report) for submission to the 2025 MAP Focal Points meeting to feed the preparation of the relevant draft decision on the MSSD Review process.

Draft Roadmap for the MSSD Review process (2024-2025)

Preparation (January-April 2024):

- Prepare the methodology (work plan) and launch the MSSD Review process.
- Set up stakeholder groups and a virtual online platform to facilitate collaboration.
- Set up thematic expert groups to assist with the drafting of the MSSD post-2025.
- Set up an advisory group to support the drafting of the MSSD post-2025. This group should be geographically and thematically balanced and chosen on the basis of criteria agreed with MCSD Steering Committee. The MCSD Steering Committee, other MCSD Members, MAP Components and MAP Partners will take part in this group, which should be limited to 20 members to keep it manageable and effective.

Stakeholder consultation (May-December 2024):

- Based on a Stakeholder Consultation Document, launch a wide participatory process through the online platform, with MCSD Members and other key regional stakeholders, about the challenges to be addressed by the MSSD post-2025 and for its alignment with relevant global and regional processes, in particular the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.
- Based on the work of the thematic expert groups and advisory group, use the results of the stakeholder consultation to prepare a draft structure for the MSSD post-2025, to be considered and approved by the MCSD Steering Committee meeting in December 2024/January 2025, and thereafter start the drafting of the revised MSSD.

Finalization, review and submission for approval (January-December 2025)

- Finalization of the first draft of the MSSD post-2025 and circulation to MCSD Members and MAP Partners (at least six weeks prior to the MCSD Meeting).
- The MCSD Meeting to comment on and endorse the first draft of the revised MSSD.
- Draft MSSD post-2025 submitted to the Meeting of MAP Focal Points for initial comments.
- Document revised to integrate MAP Focal Point's comments.
- MSSD post-2025 submitted to COP 24 for adoption.

Challenges and the Way Forward

The synchronisation between these two processes, the MSSD final evaluation (2024-2025) and MSSD Review (2024-2025), is expected to be challenging. This is not only due to the tight timeframe for data collection, research and sharing of key lessons learned during the previous implementation period but because of the complexity related to the implementation of the MSSD in the Mediterranean context, as there is an urgent need for integrating economic, social, cultural and environmental objectives in national policies and programmes, in addition to the need for building human and institutional capacity, and enhance partnerships and access to the financial resources.

Nevertheless, this offers a valuable opportunity to the MCSD Members and MCSD Secretariat to demonstrate collective efforts and show active engagement, ownership, and strong leadership to complete these two tasks in a quality and timely manner. Therefore, the participation of all stakeholders, including national and local governments, civil society, academia, the private sector, and the support of regional institutions, women and youth networks, and the media will play a critical role in the review and evaluation process of the Strategy.

The review of the 2005 MSSD will be led by the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) with the assistance of the Secretariat to the Barcelona Convention (Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan – UNEP/MAP) through its Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre (PB/RAC) and the support of the other MAP components (RACs).

The review of the Strategy will be based on key existing MAP initiatives and instruments and draw upon the findings and outcomes of existing activities and previous assessments. It builds on synergies and interlinkages identified between key development issues in line with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. That is why we encourage and appreciate the commitment of all concerned stakeholders to support the MCSD in completing these two tasks and implementing the Strategy.