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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

Antalya, Turkey, 7-10 December 2021

Agenda Item 5: Ministerial Session

Progress Report on Activities Carried Out during the 2020-2021 Biennium

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I. Introduction

1. This report is a summary of activities and outputs carried out for the implementation of the 2020-2021 Programme of Work (PoW) of the United Nations Environment Programme /Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) adopted by the 21st Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 21). The progress report highlights activities delivered in the period between January 2020 and October 2021 by the Coordinating Unit and the MAP Components, with emphasis on the most recent developments.
2. Information is aggregated at strategic outcome level under the seven themes of the POW 2020-2021, corresponding to the overarching theme, the core themes, and the cross-cutting themes of the UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021 as well as information on Financial, Personnel, and Administrative matters. More detailed information on process, activities and midterm results can be found in the Bureau Meetings Reports and in the reports of the MAP Components' Focal Points meetings (UNEP/MED IG.25/Inf.3 and UNEP/MED WG.515/Inf.7).

II. Main Activities/Outputs per PoW Theme

II.1 Overarching Theme: GOVERNANCE

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

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

3. During the current biennium, the Depositary has communicated to the Secretariat the deposit on 19 October 2020 of the instrument of ratification by Bosnia and Herzegovina of the Amendments to the Barcelona Convention, which entered into force for Bosnia and Herzegovina on 18 November 2020. With the deposit of the said instrument, the universal ratification of the 1995 Amendments to the Barcelona Convention has been achieved by the 22 Contracting Parties.
4. Efforts continue to further promote the ratification of the Protocols to the Barcelona Convention, in particular the ratification of the Dumping Protocol which requires a single additional ratification to enter into force. To this end, online bilateral meetings with Contracting Parties have been used to the extent possible, taking into account limitations posed due to the measures to contain COVID-19. Increased policy direction is needed to facilitate the Ratification of the Amendments to the Dumping Protocol, in particular, and of all other Protocols by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention who have not yet done so.

Table 1: Summary of Status of Ratification

22 Contracting Parties have accepted the amendments to the Convention, 1995;
15 Contracting Parties have accepted the amendments to the Dumping Protocol, 1995;
17 Contracting Parties have accepted the amendments to the LBS Protocol, 1996;
8 Contracting Parties have ratified the Offshore Protocol, 1994;
17 Contracting Parties have ratified the SPA and Biodiversity Protocol, 1995;
7 Contracting Parties have ratified the Hazardous Waste Protocol, 1996;
17 Contracting Parties have ratified the new Prevention and Emergency Protocol, 2002;
12 Contracting Parties have ratified ICZM Protocol, 2008.

Table 2: Ratification of Barcelona Convention and Protocols by individual Contracting Parties

<i>Contracting Parties</i>	Albania	Algeria	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Croatia	Cyprus	European Union	Egypt	France	Greece	Israel	Italy	Lebanon	Libya	Malta	Monaco	Montenegro	Morocco	Slovenia	Spain	Syria	Tunisia	Turkey	
<i>Legal instruments</i>																							
Barcelona Convention																							
and Amendments																							
Dumping Protocol																							
and Amendments																							
Emergency Protocol																							
Prevention and Emergency Protocol																							
LBS Protocol																							
and Amendments																							
SPA Protocol																							
SPA and Biodiversity Protocol																							
Offshore Protocol																							
Hazardous Wastes Protocol																							
ICZM Protocol																							

Instrument of ratification, adhesion approval or accession deposited and Convention or Protocol entered into force
No instrument of ratification, adhesion, approval or accession deposited
Instrument of ratification, adhesion, approval or accession deposited but Protocol has not entered into force yet

Effective legal, policy and logistic support provided to MAP decision-making process including advisory bodies meetings

5. In line with the decision-making process, the regular meetings of the governing and advisory bodies of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system have been convened with an active participation of representatives of Contracting Parties (CPs) and stakeholders, while in some cases efforts should be made in order for meetings to be attended by all CPs, to the extent possible.

6. During the current biennium, the Coordinating Unit and MAP Components organized the following main governance meetings:

(a) The 89th (Teleconference, 22-23 April 2020), 90th (Teleconference, 10-11 November 2020) and 91st

(Teleconference, 7-8 July 2021) Meetings of the Bureau;

(b) The 16th (Teleconference, 16-18 June 2020 and 27-28 January 2021) and 17th (Teleconference, 10-11 June 2021) Compliance Committee Meetings;

(c) The MAP Components' Focal Points meetings, through teleconference, as follows: Plan Bleu/RAC Focal Points Meeting (19-20 May 2021); SCP/RAC Focal Points Meeting (1-3 June 2021); PAP/RAC Focal Points Meeting (24-25 May 2021); 15th SPA/Biological Diversity (BD) Thematic Focal Points Meeting (22-25 June 2021); REMPEC Focal Points Meeting (31 May-2 June 2021); INFO/RAC Focal Points Meetings (14-15 June 2021) and MED POL Focal Points Meeting (27-28 May, with resumed sessions to take place on 9 July and 6-7 October 2021);

(d) The MAP Focal Points Meeting on the MTS (Teleconference, 13-15 April 2021), as well as the 1st and 2nd Meetings of the MTS Steering Committee (Teleconferences, 10-11 November 2020 and 5-6 July 2021, respectively, back-to-back with the 90th and 91st Bureau Meetings);

(e) The 19th Meeting of the MCSD (Teleconference, 7-9 June 2021) and the 21st (Teleconference, 13-14 May 2021) and 22nd (15-17 December 2020) Meetings of the MCSD Steering Committee;

(f) The 2nd Meeting of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (OFOG) (Teleconference, 3-4 June 2021);

(g) Seven meetings of the Executive Coordination Panel (ECP), namely ECP 40 (Rome, Italy, 30-31 January 2020), ECP 41 (Teleconference, 19-20 May 2020), ECP 42 (Teleconference, 8-9 July 2020), ECP 43 (Teleconference, 28-29 September 2020), ECP 44 (Teleconference, 19-20 January 2021), ECP 45 (Teleconference, 29-30 March 2021), and ECP 46 (Marseille, hybrid event, 6 September 2021), while two informal ECP meetings also took place in the months of May and June 2021;

(h) The MAP Focal Points Meeting (Teleconference, 10-17 September 2021) preceded by the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group Meeting (Teleconference, 9 September 2021).

7. The above meetings reviewed progress achieved and provided policy and technical guidance for successfully delivering key outputs mandated by COP 21. They contributed to the effective implementation of the Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021, the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-2021 and the relevant COP Decisions and moved forward the preparations for the 2021 MAP Focal Points Meeting and the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 22) (Antalya, Turkey, 2-5 December 2021).

Resource mobilization

8. The Coordinating Unit, in close collaboration with the MAP Components, has made every effort to channel a coordinated mobilization of external resources by the MAP-Barcelona Convention system in line with the priorities of the Mid-Term Strategy (MTS), the biannual Programme of Work and Budget and the existing Resource Mobilization Strategy (RMS). To this end, each MAP Component is required to develop a Project Fiche for each approved external project, which includes general information on the project but also a justification and comments on the MAP Component's involvement and the added value to MAP-Barcelona Convention system. The current compilation of Project Fiches was presented in document UNEP/MED WG.515/Inf.11.

9. Following the kickoff meeting (20-22 July 2020) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) – UNEP “Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing Environmental Security” and the seven Child Projects executed by UNEP/MAP, the Secretariat together with executing partners moved ahead with the implementation of activities on the ground. The first Project Steering Committee meetings were organized for five MedProgramme's Child Projects in 2021 to take stock of progress achieved and approve the annual budgets, budget revisions and annual workplans for 2021-2022.

10. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project “Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in the Adriatic Sea through Marine Spatial Planning” (GEF Adriatic) progressed consistently. The 3rd Project Steering Committee Meeting took place virtually on 7 July 2020; considering the COVID-19 impact on the project activities, the steering committee approved a Project extension until 30 June

2021 and the revised Project workplan and budget. The project was concluded successfully. The Secretariat submitted the final report to UNEP for its submission to GEF. The final conference of the project was hosted by the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism of Montenegro on 28 June 2021. The GEF Adriatic project has had a powerful demonstrative impact expected to reverberate well beyond the Adriatic, particularly in promoting Marine Spatial Planning processes based on the Ecosystem Approach.

11. The Secretariat is working on the preparation of the GEF funded project document (FishEBM MED – GEF ID 10560) in cooperation with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (FAO/GFCM). The full-fledged project document will be submitted to the GEF Secretariat for endorsement in December 2021. The project financing by GEF is 7,273,973 EUR, with UNEP/MAP expected benefit 2,000,000 EUR.

12. The EU-funded IMAP-MPA (4 million Euros) project execution has started in the current biennium. The kick-off meetings in the beneficiary countries for the establishment of the National IMAP Steering Committees are progressing well (Israel, July 2021; Tunisia, October 2020; Libya, October 2020; Algeria, March 2021; Morocco, March 2021; Lebanon, July 2021), while additional meeting is under preparation in Egypt. Regional experts were recruited on Eutrophication (IMAP-EO5), Coast and Hydrography (IMAP-EO7/EO8), Contaminants (IMAP-EO9), Marine Litter (IMAP-EO10), and 6 regional experts for Biodiversity-NIS (IMAP EO1, EO2). Other activities in progress include the organization of the 2020 Forum of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (29 November to 1 December 2021, in Monaco and online), the development of a strategic document on MPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures in the Mediterranean, in line with the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the initiation of the processes for the elaboration of management plans, respectively for Rachgoun Island in Algeria, Tyre Coast Nature Reserve in Lebanon and Gulf of Sirt in Libya.

13. The implementation of the Project “Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) principles and practices in the ENP South region - SEIS Support Mechanism” (2016-2019), was concluded successfully. A final Steering Committee Meeting for closure of the project was held on 21 September 2020. This event was accompanied by a corresponding communication/visibility campaign and engagement with the eligible Project countries for continued cooperation in the future. The event also marked the launching of the joint EEA and UNEP/MAP Synthesis Report for policy makers (Towards a cleaner Mediterranean: a decade of progress).

14. The two EU funded projects “Efficient Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach-based Integrated Monitoring and Assessment of the Mediterranean Sea and Coasts in synergy with the EU MSFD” (EcAp-MED III) and Marine Litter MED II, were approved by the European Commission in August 2020 and were officially launched at the Integrated Meetings of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on IMAP Implementation (CORMONs), which were held on 1-3 December 2020 via videoconference. The First Steering Committee of the EcAp MED III Project was held on 28 April 2021. All legal agreements with the MAP Components are in place since April 2021, whereas the SSFAs for execution of the national activities have been shared with all beneficiary countries in August 2021; the SSFA with Israel was countersigned in September 2021 and the legal agreements with Morocco and Lebanon are in the final stage of negotiations before their administrative processing. The First Steering Committee of the Marine Litter MED II Project was organized on 20 September 2021, the agreements with MAP Components were all finalized in September 2021 and the SSFAs for execution of the national activities have been shared with all beneficiary countries for comments since August 2021. The SSFA with Israel and Morocco are in the final stage of negotiations before their administrative processing.

15. The implementation of the Cooperation Agreement with the Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea Protection (IMELS) is concluded successfully. The final meeting of its Steering Committee was held in May 2020, highlighting the importance of the outputs delivered in its framework. In 2021, a limited number of activities continued implementation benefiting from a last extension of the Cooperation Agreement until the end of April 2021. As also mentioned by the Government of Italy during the Meeting of MAP Focal Points (10-17 September 2021) a new bilateral

contribution agreement is expected to be signed between the Italian Ministry of Ecological Transition and the Secretariat ahead of COP 22, to support the implementation of a number of activities of the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work 2022-2023.

16. Plan Bleu/RAC has worked to mobilize external resources through projects: a project proposal was submitted to the Région Sud – Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (French local government) to support funding of MED 2050 roadmap Phase 2, as approved by COP 21, with particular focus on the module on trends. The total budget is 80,000 Euros. The proposal has been accepted and official notification has been received in December 2020. Plan Bleu/RAC also submitted a project proposal on “*Approche participative pour l’adaptation au changement climatique sur le territoire de la Communauté d’Agglomération Sophia – Antipolis*” to Fondation de France. The project has been accepted in August 2021 with a budget of 150,000 Euros over a period of three years. Plan Bleu/RAC is a partner in a consortium of a project called “WaterLands” in the framework of the H2020 programme (30 partners led by University College Dublin), aiming at restoring wetlands and peatlands in 11 pilot sites over 5 years (consortium budget 23,000,000 Euros, including 390,000 Euros for Plan Bleu/RAC). The project has been accepted in June 2021. Plan Bleu/RAC is also a partner in a consortium functioning for 5 years a European Topic Center on adaptation to climate change for the European Environment Agency. The lead entity is CMCC (Italy); the application has been accepted in September 2021. In November 2020, Plan Bleu/RAC also signed an agreement with Agence Française de Développement with a total budget of 70,000 Euros over 16 months, focusing on sustainable aquaculture and desalination as well as foresight at the level of a hydrographic basin in Morocco. In September 2021, Plan Bleu/RAC has also concluded an agreement with ADEME (the French energy transition agency) for an amount of 190,000 Euros over two years, focusing on climate change adaptation, in particular in relation to MedECC, the regional observatory on environment and development, nature-based solutions and economic instruments. Plan Bleu/RAC also participates, with a grant of 100,000 Euros, in the EU funded project “ABIOMMED” (July 2021-June 2023) and is in charge of an activity promoting socio-economic analysis of measures towards GES.

17. SPA/RAC has also worked to mobilize external resources through projects: it is partner in a consortium (56 Partners led by INTRASOFT International S.A, Greece) applying for the 3 years project “Integrated digital twins for marine and maritime data and information services” (ILIAD), in the framework of the EU H2020 work programme. The project Grant Agreement signature is under processing. SPA/RAC budget as end users’ partner within the Consortium is around 300,000 Euros. SPA/RAC collaborated, as a project co-leader and partner, with the European Topic Centre, University of Malaga (ETC-UMA: project leader) and other partners in developing and submitting a project proposal entitled “ENhancing Socio-Ecological RESilience in Mediterranean coastal area” (ENSERES) to the EC ENI CBC MED Programme. The project has been selected and the grant signed late July 2021, it will start on the 1st of October 2021 for a duration of 24 months. The activities are planned in France, Lebanon, Spain and Tunisia. The total budget obtained from EC is 1,027,929 Euros, from which 235,000 Euros are for SPA/RAC. The MAVA foundation accepted to fund the second phase of the MedBycatch project “Understanding Mediterranean multi-taxa” (or ‘Bycatch’) of vulnerable species and testing mitigation-a collaborative approach (October 2020 - October 2022). The total budget provided by MAVA is 3,976,087.29 Euros from which 415,013 Euros are for SPA/RAC. In June 2021, MAVA Foundation also provided SPA/RAC with 11,000 Euros to implement a small project about awareness activities related to Bycatch “Experiences & knowledge sharing for building strong relations and maintaining collaborations between fishery observers and the fishing community” (June 2021 -May 2022). This project is implemented by MEDASSET (coordinator), SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, DEKAMER, TUDAV, Doga Dernegi, WWF Turkey, AAO/BirdLife in Tunisia, WWF_MED, INRH, with a total budget of 45,000 euros. SPA/RAC joined The “QUIETSEA” project, (February 2021-January 2023) which aims to assist regional cooperation for the practical implementation of the MSFD’s second cycle by providing methods and tools for D11 (underwater noise) funded by the European Commission (32.739 Euros), developed by a consortium made up of 10 entities from 10 countries, and coordinated by the CTN-Marine Technology Center del Mar. Regarding the “Co-managed No-Take Zones/MPAs project” (July 2020-October 2022), SPA/RAC is supporting the relevant national authorities of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey, through a participatory approach, in updating, developing and

implementing management plans, to reduce the impact of fishing activities on species and habitats, based on the results of the MAVA-funded MedKeyHabitats I and II projects. The second phase of the MAVA funded “Conservation of marine turtles in the Mediterranean countries (Marine turtles) project has started in July 2020; SPA/RAC will continue strengthening good practices in Kuriat Islands (Tunisia) and scale up in new priority areas such as the Tyre Nature reserve (Lebanon) and Sirte - Farwa (Libya) through promotion of awareness and ecotourism actions. SPA/RAC is supporting the Tunisian national authority to implement a regular survey on coastal cetacean species following the IMAP requirements. This activity is developed in cooperation with the Aquarium of Genoa (Italy) within the Project “An international network to protect the bottlenose dolphin and other cetacean species in the Mediterranean Sea” with an amount of 15,000 Euros. SPA/RAC also participates, with a budget of 113 859 €, to the EU funded project “ABIOMMED” (July 2021-June 2023) by providing guidance and methods on harmonized assessment of the D1/EO1 (Biodiversity) and D6/EO6 (Sea floor integrity).

18. The two-year 2019-2020 EU-funded Project Western Mediterranean Region Marine Oil and HNS Pollution Cooperation (West MOPoCo) was completed on 31 April 2021. A follow-up project proposal, addressing Chemical incidents in ports, was prepared under the leadership of France, with REMPEC as a member of the Project Steering Committee, for submission to the EC's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department's (ECHO) call for proposals. In the second half of 2021, REMPEC in consultation with partners, will prepare a project proposal capitalizing the West MOPoCo Project outputs to further strengthen cooperation and synergies between the Mediterranean coastal States and addressing the gaps identified in the West MOPoCo project, through capacity building activities and exercises, for its submission to the DG ECHO 2022 call for proposals for Union Civil Protection Mechanism full scale exercises.

19. In the context of the preparation of the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) and its Action Plan, and to ensure coordination and concertation in the preparation of projects supporting the implementation of the said Strategy, REMPEC compiled a set of project sheets, under document REMPEC/WG.51/INF.11/Rev.1. Taking into account these projects, the Secretariat and REMPEC, in consultation with IMO, submitted a concept note for a three-year “GHG Med” Project to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for its consideration. The project main objective is to support the implementation of the Common Strategic Objective 2 of the Strategy and its Action Plan. The proposed project beneficiary countries include Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, and Morocco. Following the approval on the use of the savings, REMPEC will assess, in the last quarter 2021, the needs of Contacting Parties, which have not yet ratified MARPOL Annex VI, and propose a corresponding resource mobilization strategy.

20. The Secretariat and REMPEC continued liaising with the International Association of Oil & Gas Producers (IOGP) and discussed the “Comprehensive Plan of Actions, including resource mobilization strategy” during the Third Meeting of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (OFOG) Sub-Group on Environmental Impact (Teleconference, 3-4 June 2021), where IOGP made reference to the Global Initiative for West, Central and Southern Africa (GI WACAF), a cooperation project between IMO and IPIECA, the global oil and gas industry association for advancing environmental and social performance, as an example of a successful experience of collaboration and co-financing involving governments, inter-governmental organizations and the private sector. Similar ways to mobilize resources could be explored for the Mediterranean region, based on funding and commitments from both the Contracting Parties and the industry.

21. SwitchMed II Project executed by UNIDO, UNEP/ Economy Division and SCP/RAC was subject to an extension to add a specific component on Blue Economy. For this purpose, an additional €3M were allocated to complement the SwitchMed II activities with new Blue Economy-related outputs: €2.5M were provided by the European Commission (DG NEAR and DG MARE) and €0.5M by the Catalan Waste Agency. With that, the contribution of Spain, through the Catalan Waste Agency, to the SwitchMed II project reaches a total of 1,930,000 €. SCP/RAC's proposal, which was prepared after consultation with the MAP CU, MED POL, Plan Bleu/RAC and SPA/RAC, was accepted by the EC. On that basis, SCP/RAC secured 1,610,000 € for the Blue Economy outputs it

intends to implement under the SwitchMed II project. The addendum to the SwitchMed II agreement between the EC and UNIDO, the lead partner, was signed in December 2020. An amendment to the Agreement between the Catalan Waste Agency-SCP/RAC and UNIDO was signed for this purpose, with activities being kicked-off.

22. The project proposal “JUST2CE - A Just Transition to the Circular Economy”, led by the Autonomous University of Barcelona and supported by SCP/RAC has been approved and funded by the Horizon EU-funded program; activities started on 1 September 2021. This Research & Innovation Action focuses on providing evidence-based decision support to policymakers, private stakeholders and civil society to promote transitional development and circular economy. The total budget that SCP/RAC will receive for JUST2CE is 383,750 EUR (out of a total project budget of 3,620.042.50 EUR). The kick-off meeting took place on the 9-10th of September 2021.

23. The project proposal submitted by SCP/RAC to BeMed call targeting the implementation of solutions in Mediterranean islands specially affected by Plastic Pollution was selected for funding and an agreement was signed between BeMed and SCP/RAC at the beginning of 2021. The project was prepared together with SMILO (Small Islands Organization) and aims at Capitalizing BeMed initiative to reduce plastic pollution in Mediterranean Islands (CapiMed-Islands). It includes strong synergies with the transferring phase of Plastic Busters MPAs projects and as an overall budget of 110.000€.

24. The project proposal “RESET - RESults Enabling Transitions. Mapping, documenting and mainstreaming green and circular economy achievements in the MED region, for replication and policy-making” was developed within the framework of the ENI-CBC MED Capitalization Call for Proposals to promote capitalization, dissemination and policy uptake of relevant green and circular economy results in the Mediterranean. The consortium is led by SCP/RAC and composed by several partners. The proposal was positively evaluated by the ENI Joint Monitoring Committee on 26 March 2021. In July 2021, SCP/RAC received the confirmation that the project proposal was successful and is currently in a negotiation phase to introduce final adjustments requested by the donor.

25. The project proposal “INPLASTICS” submitted by SCP/RAC under BRS Small Grant Programme on Plastic Waste was selected for funding. An agreement for that purpose is under preparation. It will mainly aim at preparing a master module on additives in plastics to be integrated within a Master on Environmental Change Management running in Universities of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (MehMed Master – Erasmus +). The overall budget is 90.000 USD.

26. The project proposal aiming at “strengthening institutional and technical capacity of Turkey on transition to circular economy in line with the EU Circular Economy Package”, in which SCP/RAC is involved as a consortium member successfully passed the first step of the selection process. A detailed project proposal was submitted mid-august 2021 and is being evaluated. The overall budget amounts to EUR 4,000,000 for EuropAid call EuropAid/140562/IH/SER/TR, to be financed by EU-IPA II funds and national contribution from Turkey.

Other activities under Strategic Outcome 1.1

27. As mandated by Decision IG.24/3 the Secretariat proceeded with the mid-term evaluations of the MSSD and of the SCP Regional Action Plan under the guidance of the MCSD Steering Committee. A stakeholder consultation was carried out under both evaluation processes with various decision-makers and stakeholders (MCSD Members, UNEP/MAP Partners, UNEP/MAP Components, and key stakeholders), through bilateral interviews, focus groups (webinars – online workshops) and a wide online survey. The following deliverables have been prepared in view of the SCP/RAC Focal Points Meeting and the 19th Meeting of the MCSD: UNEP/MED WG.493/5: Mid-Term Evaluation of the MSSD – Draft Final Report; UNEP/MED WG.493/6: Mid-Term Evaluation of the SCP Regional Action Plan – Draft Final Report; UNEP/MED WG.493/Inf.4: MSSD Mid-Term Evaluation: Outputs from the Stakeholder Consultation. Both evaluation reports were submitted to and reviewed by the 19th Meeting of the MCSD (Teleconference, 7-9 June 2021).

28. The Regional Meeting of National Experts on the Mediterranean Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) (Teleconference, 10 March 2021) organised by

REMPEC, reviewed the second draft of the Strategy and adopted a set of conclusions and recommendations. The third draft of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) was considered under document REMPEC/WG.51/5, by the Fourteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Teleconference, 31 May – 2 June 2021). The meeting agreed upon the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) and its Action Plan (document UNEP/MED IG.25/19).

29. The update of the Mediterranean Strategy on Ships' Ballast Water Management, including its Action Plan and Timetable, progressed through a consultation process launched by the Secretariat, REMPEC and SPA/RAC to collect feedback and comments from the UNEP/MAP Focal Points, REMPEC Prevention Focal Points and SPA/BD Focal Points, which were taken into account in the final draft Ballast Water Management Strategy for the Mediterranean Sea (2022-2027) submitted to the 14th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC and the 15th Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points, for their consideration. Both meetings examined and agreed upon the draft Mediterranean BWM Strategy (2022-2027), which is set out in document UNEP/MED IG.25/20.

30. Plan Bleu/RAC continues work on regional tools, including possible guidelines on sustainable tourism with a particular focus on nautical activities, pleasure boating including cruises. Guidelines for sustainable cruise and recreational boating will be finalized in the framework of the Interreg Med project Blue Growth community in partnership with Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection community and Sustainable Tourism community. Three Stakeholders' workshops (23 November 2020, 25 May 2021 & 9 June 2021) have been organized to define a common vision, the challenges and the good practices for the sustainability of cruises and recreational boating in the Mediterranean. The draft guidelines were presented in an event "Cruise and Biodiversity" organized by Marseille Provence Cruise Club at the margins of the IUCN Congress in September 2021.

31. In line with the mandate given by COP 21 (Naples, Italy, December 2019) a highly inclusive and bottom-up process was followed for the elaboration of the Post-2020 SAP BIO, including consultations with the SPA/BD Focal Points, the reactivation of the SAP BIO Advisory Committee, and a series of online meetings. The Post 2020 SAP BIO, which was approved by the SPA/BD Focal Points meeting and by the MAP Focal Points Meeting is aligned and harmonized with the global frameworks and processes in particular the Sustainable Development Goals and the ongoing draft CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, expected to be adopted in May 2022 by CBD COP 15. In this respect, SPA/RAC attended a series of CBD preparatory meetings and contributed to the review of Post 2020-related CBD documents with Mediterranean views.

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

Compliance and reporting

32. As of 19 May 2021, the status of reporting can be summarized as follows: (a) 2012-2013 and 2014-2015 biennia: the Secretariat continues working with Libya and Syria to submit their outstanding national implementation reports step-by-step, (b) biennium 2016-2017: a total of 18 Contracting Parties have submitted national implementation reports, and (c) biennium 2018-2019: a total of 11 Contracting Parties have submitted national implementation reports, with reporting rates for submission ranging across the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, from 50% (11 reporting Parties out of 22) for the Barcelona Convention and the SPA/BD Protocol to 27% (6 reporting Parties out of 22) for the Hazardous Wastes Protocol. As the time of writing the present report, 7 more Contracting Parties have started working towards finalizing the submission of their national implementation reports, with technical support from the Secretariat and INFO/RAC provided upon request.

33. The 16th and 17th Meetings of the Compliance Committee of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols took place during this biennium, through teleconference (information document UNEP/MED IG.25/Inf.4). Building on the previous sessions and intersessional work, the Compliance Committee focused on followed-up on the communication from the NGO Ecologistas en Acción de la Región Murciana as to the implementation by Spain of the SPA/BD Protocol in the SPAMI Mar Menor and on how to enhance its effective functioning. The draft decision on the Compliance

Committee is presented in document UNEP/MED IG.25/5.

Implementation of Ecosystem Approach Roadmap

34. The implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap made progress in the reporting period and was boosted by three EU-funded projects namely IMAP-MPA, EcAp MED III and Marine Litter MED II activities, which are implemented in a coordinated manner with the relevant PoW activities, ensuring complementarities and avoiding any possible overlapping.

35. A milestone on IMAP implementation in the reporting period was the organization of the thematic CORMON Meetings held virtually (December 2020, March 2021, April 2021, June 2021) which reviewed important documents for the implementation of IMAP and the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR, in particular the state of play of the implementation of the 2023 QSR Roadmap including an operational plan, and the main elements of the 2023 MED QSR methodological approach, outline, structure and contents. In parallel, a number of IMAP-related technical documents, including on monitoring and assessment scales, monitoring protocols, GES assessment methodologies, Data Standard and Data Dictionaries, etc., were reviewed by the thematic CORMON meetings. Key outcome documents validated from a technical point of view from the CORMON meetings were reviewed by the MAP Component Focal Points meetings and the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group Meeting, held in September 2021, for their use for the 2023 MED QSR preparation.

36. Regular meetings of the MAP Ecosystem Approach Task Force are held on a monthly basis including the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit, MED POL, SPA/RAC, PAP/RAC, INFO/RAC, REMPEC and Plan Bleu/RAC, to coordinate the work for the implementation of IMAP and implementation of 2023 MED QSR Roadmap, as well as the implementation of related projects and MAP PoW activities.

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

37. Engagement with stakeholders (NGOs, local authorities, civil society, scientific community, etc.) and identification of potential synergies with global and regional organisations in order to increase the effectiveness of work was realised, inter alia, through the involvement in relevant international initiatives and the operationalizing or conclusion of legal agreements. In this context, the initiatives described below play a significant role in implementing COP Decision IG.19/6 on MAP/Civil society cooperation and partnership. By promoting cooperation and partnership, UNEP/MAP also responds to the call from UNEP Headquarters to encourage programmatic cooperation and coordination with other MEAs or international and regional organizations, given the importance of enhancing synergies with other actors.

38. Following the call for new MAP Partners issued by the Secretariat, and its promotion by the Coordinating Unit and MAP Components through a series of activities, the Secretariat has received and assessed thirteen new applications for MAP Partners. Furthermore, 7 applications for the renewal of accreditation of MAP Partners endorsed at the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 19) (Athens, Greece, February 2016) were received. More information is presented in the Draft Decision on Governance (document UNEP/MAP IG.25/6), as well as in the Information Document UNEP/MAP WG.515/Inf.16 which was submitted at the MAP Focal Points Meeting.

39. The Secretariat continued working with the Secretariat of the Union of the Mediterranean (UfM) for the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) between the two Organizations, which was signed in 2013. Several bilateral meetings and exchanges took place on the possible update of the Appendix of the MoU in order to better reflect the recent regional and global evolutions related to the environment and sustainable development, in line with the mandates of the two organizations and in order to make use of their complementarities most effectively. The two organizations agreed to postpone the process of updating the Appendix of the MoU for the next biennium.

40. The Secretariat has worked together with FAO/GFCM for the update of the MoU that was signed between the two organizations in 2012, to better reflect ongoing activities and to incorporate new ones. The two organizations agreed that the update of the MoU should be limited to the Appendix. The

updated Appendix of the MoU is submitted for consideration as an Annex to the draft decision of Governance (document UNEP/MAP IG.25/6).

41. During the period under reporting the Secretariat has been very active in promoting new partnerships. In view of consolidating the dialogue between UNEP/MAP and regional parliamentarians' bodies, the Secretariat liaised with the Parliamentary of the Mediterranean (PAM) and the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD) towards the preparation of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU). The draft texts of the two proposed MoUs were prepared and are contained as Annexes to the draft decision of Governance (document UNEP/MAP IG.25/6). On the other hand, although exchanges with UNESCO/MAP continued following up to Decision IG.24/2 on Governance adopted at COP 21, it was not possible to complete the internal discussions on the issue of the joint collaboration; therefore, and despite the several contacts by the Coordinating Unit to UNESCO/MAB Secretariat, the proposed MoU could not be concluded during the current biennium.

42. Following Decision IG.24/2 on Governance, the Secretariat and SPA/RAC, GFCM, ACCOBAMS and IUCN Med are collaborating in relation to spatial-based protection and management measures for marine biodiversity, and to identify activities feasible to be done in synergy based on their programmed activities and commonalities, including spatial management work through GFCM FRAs and Barcelona Convention SPAMIs. UNEP/MAP is facilitating the process for this biennium, while three working teleconferences took place. Following an initial proposal by SPA/RAC, the partners identified two pilot areas to focus on, i.e., Jabuka Pomo Pit in the Adriatic and the cetaceans' corridor in the north-west Mediterranean. Further steps will include gathering and combining information on these two areas, possibly also through desk studies. When the process is in a more mature stage, other partners, such as IMO and CBD may also be invited.

43. During the "One Planet Summit" held in Paris in January 2021, a "Coalition for an Exemplary Mediterranean in 2030" was launched, that prepared a draft Action Plan entitled "The Mediterranean: a model sea by 2030" with the active contribution of a number of Contracting Parties and regional organizations. The Action Plan is built around four priority axes, namely i) Increase ambition for preserving marine and coastal biodiversity in the Mediterranean; ii) Promote and develop sustainable fishing to end overfishing by 2030; iii) Redouble efforts to combat marine pollution, particularly so that no plastic is discharged into the Mediterranean by 2030; and iv) Promote maritime transport practices which protect the marine environment and combat climate change. The Secretariat has been actively involved in the preparation of the Action Plan, by participating as Observer in the consultation meetings with the engaged countries and regional Organizations and holding bilateral meetings with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs that is steering the preparatory process, with a view to ensuring that this initiative will build on existing regional processes and initiatives and will contribute to the achievement of regional objectives, in particular those adopted under the UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention. Key MAP instruments and processes are referenced in the draft Action Plan and UNEP/MAP is attributed an important role in the implementation of the Action Plan as outlined in its governance mechanism paper. A Technical Expert to be funded by France is planned to be seconded to UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit to support the coordination of the Action Plan implementation ensuring synergies with the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention while the expert is also expected to bring an additional expertise on marine litter in the Coordinating Unit.

44. The Secretariat is actively participating in several ocean related processes in the regional and global levels, including the preparation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022-2025, where the Secretariat provided substantive comments and participated in several meetings for the preparation and finalization of this important strategic document of UNEP; the process for the development of an African Ocean Governance Strategy (the 3rd consultative meeting was organized virtually on 15-16 June 2021); as well as the International Ocean Governance process, a stakeholder platform organized by the EU for the future of the oceans.

45. UNEP/MAP continues collaborating with the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Partnership (PWP); UNEP/MAP, through MED POL and SCP RAC, is currently actively participating in three working groups emanating from this initiative focusing on prevention, collection and transboundary

movement of plastic waste and is leading the work of the PWP-PG2-Subgroup 2 concerned with plastic waste collection, recycling and other recovery, including financing and related markets.

46. Synergies and complementarities between the European Union's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) implementation have witnessed marked improvements, including through the close collaboration of the Secretariat with the MSFD Working Groups, and especially the Working Group on Good Environmental Status as well as the Working Group on Data, Information and Knowledge Exchange, in addition to the Technical Groups on NIS, Marine Litter, Chemicals and Noise and the Working Group on Programmes of Measures Social and Economic Analysis currently co-chaired by UNEP/MAP through Plan Bleu/RAC.

47. The European Environment Agency (EEA) and UNEP/MAP concluded the EEA-UNEP/MAP 2nd Horizon 2020 indicator-based assessment report and its Executive Summary "Horizon 2020 Synthesis.", as a key outcome of the joint efforts by the EEA-UNEP/MAP to review and monitor progress toward a cleaner Mediterranean based on countries' inputs and key findings of various regional projects. This process is carried out in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean Horizon 2020 Review and Monitoring Group and the support mechanism of the ENI SEIS II South EU funded Project. In the framework of the EEA-UNEP/MAP Joint Work Plan 2016-2021, a review of its status of implementation was completed in cooperation with EEA, showing a satisfactory progress in key areas of the Joint Work Plan, and highlighting some actions where there is room for further cooperation. The two Organizations jointly developed a Concept Note with key strategic priorities for future cooperation beyond 2021, i.e. building strengthened knowledge base, responding to political priorities, supporting digital transformation, ensuring coordinated networking, communication and stakeholder interaction, which was approved in a bilateral meeting held on 6 April 2021. Work is ongoing for the preparation of a Joint Work Plan for the period 2022-2030 around the above-mentioned strategic priorities with the aim of having it signed by COP 22.

48. In Spring 2020, the Secretariat provided feedback on the draft Strategy for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) and its Communication Strategy, coordinated jointly by UNEP and FAO. Inputs were provided by the Secretariat, including all MAP Components, and submitted to the UN Decade team. On 15 September 2020, the Secretariat attended the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration Webinar "Strategy Reveal and Engagement Kickstarter", which introduced the strategy and its partner engagement opportunities. UNEP/MAP is also in contact with the Best Practices Task Force, set up by FAO, and will follow-up to discuss possible collaboration, and in particular on how UNEP/MAP best practices could be disseminated further as part of the Decade. Discussions will be organized with UNEP and FAO to identify further opportunities for collaboration.

49. MED POL participated in the 8th Meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the PRTR Protocol of the Aarhus Convention (16-18 December 2020, Geneva) and presented the needs and challenges for capacity building in relation to pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs) and experience gained during the 4th Cycle of NBB Update. MEDPOL also participated in the 13th Meeting of the International PRTR Coordinating Group (ICG-13), on 27 January 2021, and shared ongoing efforts on updating the LBS annexes and development of estimation techniques and methodologies for NBB/PRTR for diffuse sources and aquaculture. Future cooperation activities that can be carried out between the UNECE Secretariat and the UNEP/MAP Secretariat were discussed, including joint measures to promote PRTR in the Mediterranean countries in synergy with ongoing efforts and sharing of experiences on estimation techniques for better data reporting.

50. The Secretariat has built a strong cooperation with the Secretariat of the Project "EU Environment Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA) in the Western Balkans and Turkey" which is supporting countries in the phase of accession to the EU (including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Turkey) to achieve reforms and developments in environmental policy and governance, enhance compliance with the EU legislation and strengthen regional cooperation. Following participation of UNEP/MAP at the TAIEX EPPA Online Sub-Regional Workshop on the implementation of the Barcelona Convention held in February 2021, a bilateral call was organized with the EPPA Secretariat aiming at setting the grounds for possible further cooperation. Willingness

was expressed by both sides to continue and strengthen this cooperation including through organization of regular bilateral meetings to provide update on work undertaken and possible joint actions, as well as with participation of UNEP/MAP in Ministerial Meetings organized by the EPPA Secretariat and, accordingly, participation of EPPA representatives in UNEP/MAP governance meetings with the status of observer if feasible. Thematic areas of common interest were identified including on ecosystem approach implementation, monitoring and assessment, pollution and marine litter, with a focus on microplastics, wastewater management and water retention measures, nature-based solutions (and green infrastructure), climate -proof measures, MPAs and other area-based management measures etc. The Secretariat, including relevant MAP Components (MED POL, REMPEC, SPA/RAC) has participated and delivered presentations in EPPA organized workshops on the implementation of Sulphur Directive (9-10 March 2021), MPAs management (20-21 April 2021) and the second workshop on the implementation of the Barcelona Convention (4-5 May 2021) and was also invited to participate in the Regional Workshop on Managing Marine Litter on 16-17 June 2021. The Secretariat has informed the MAP Focal Point of the EU on these developments.

51. The IUCN World Conservation Congress held in Marseille, provided an important opportunity for the Mediterranean conservation community to exchange new solutions for addressing the main challenges of the region in terms of climate action and biodiversity conservation. Plan Bleu/RAC co-organised eight sessions/events in the context of the IUCN World Conservation Congress (related to SDG 14, Nature-Based solutions, Sustainable aquaculture, Cruise and biodiversity, Tourism and biodiversity, and the dissemination of the findings of the SoED2020 and MAR1 reports), including three events organized as part of the Mediterranean Stand—an initiative led by a consortium of 12 Mediterranean organizations including SPA/RAC and Plan Bleu/RAC. Plan Bleu/RAC also held several events on the IUCN French Committee Pavilion and the French Pavilion in partnership with various partners such as the French Ministry of the Sea, the French Development Agency or Fondation de la Mer. In addition, Plan Bleu/RAC renewed its agreement with the Union for the Mediterranean for joint support to the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC) activities for the period 2021 – 2023, in line with the previous agreement which expired on 31 December 2020.

52. REMPEC and UNEP/MAP established synergies with several organizations, as follows: with HELCOM and the Bonn Agreement in the preparation of the HNS Inter-regional Response Manual; with the Bonn Agreement, HELCOM as well as other regional seas programmes and the EU to exchange on best practice on CI19 with a view to better defining “acute pollutions” and related level to trigger monitoring of the impact to the environment; with the EC (DG ECHO), to establish a Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean; with IMO, HELCOM, the Bonn Agreement, Cedre, Transport Canada, and the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, to review and upgrade MIDSIS-TROCS; with IMO, SCP/RAC, UfMS, the WestMED Initiative, the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) (through SAFEMED IV Project), and MTCC Africa to mobilize resources for the implementation of the Initial IMO Strategy on the reduction of GHG emissions from ships and support low carbon shipping and clean ports in the Mediterranean; and with REMPEC’s Partners for the drafting of the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) and its Action Plan focused on inter-linkages/interplay/synergies.

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

53. As a follow up to the Regional Workshop “The Mediterranean Sea We Need for the Future We Want” (Venice, Italy, 21-23 January 2020), organized in the framework of the preparations for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 (Decade), the strategic orientations and related initial set of actions of relevance for UNEP/MAP were considered by the Integrated CORMONs Meeting that was organized from 1 to 3 December 2020. This Meeting provided recommendations regarding further contribution of UNEP/MAP to the achievement of the objectives of the Implementation Plan of the Decade. In this regard it should also be noted that MED POL has identified the strategic directions and orientations to guide science-policy interface within implementation of new Medium-Term Strategy of UNEP/MAP, and has participated in the preparation of the “Science We Need for the Mediterranean Sea We Want (SciNMeet)” Programme Proposal that

has been submitted within the 1st Ocean Decade Call for Action of UNESCO in the context of establishing the implementation framework of the UN Decade.

54. The Study on Trends and Outlook on Marine Pollution, Maritime Traffic and Offshore Activities in the Mediterranean, prepared by REMPEC in collaboration with MED POL, SPA/RAC, the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Project Team, and the CU, aiming at contributing to the preparation of the MED QSR 2023 and the Med 2050 Roadmap, was reviewed and validated by the 14th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC, which requested the Secretariat to undertake the necessary editorial review and publish it.

55. Plan Bleu/RAC has continued the work on the report on the State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean 2020 (SoED), which has undergone full layout and graphic design and is now available on the dedicated website www.planbleu.org/soed, along with the Summary for Decisions Makers, Key Messages, a video, 10 thematic infographics in three languages and a very visual booklet that compiles all infographics. Five themes have been selected to produce thematic notes, further detailing information contained in the SoED (maritime transport, emerging pollutants, demographic trends, offshore activities, desalination). The thematic brief on demographic trends was published in September 2020. The brief on emerging pollutants has been finalized in May 2021, in consultation with MEDPOL and with the support of the French water agency for the Rhône-Mediterranean-Corsica region. The briefs on maritime transport and on offshore activities are under finalization in collaboration with REMPEC and the brief on desalination is planned to be finalized before the end of 2021, in consultation with MEDPOL and with the support of the French cooperation agency AfD. The SoED has been printed and sent to Contracting Parties and partners. The SoED has been presented to the public at numerous occasions.

56. Plan Bleu/RAC has continued implementing activities included in the Med 2050 Roadmap. New members were invited to join the foresight group to improve its composition, and the scientific and advisory committees were composed, including with representatives of Parties through a call shared with all Contracting Parties. Foresight group meetings take place regularly (13-14 October 2020, 2 December 2020, 28 January 2021, 17 March 2021, 28 April 2021, 9 June 2021, 7-8 July 2021, 28 September 2021 and one more planned on 27 October 2021). The Advisory Committee met in January 2021 and is planned to meet in November 2021. Four publications have been issued: (i) a methodological note (ii) a publication on demographic trends; (iii) a publication comparing projected trends in the 2005 report and actual trends; (iv) a dashboard of long-term trends. The work on Fact Sheets is on-going to collect in a synthetic way some major data and draw up hypotheses on the future challenges for 35 key themes of the “Mediterranean System”, as identified by the Foresight Group, using the DPSIR model (Driving forces - Pressures - State - Impacts - Responses). The Med 2050 platform is now fully deployed, and the MED 2050 newsletter is disseminated through the MED 2050 network (more than 300 people registered to this network). The 2nd module of MED2050 on visions of the Mediterranean future by 2050 is under preparation and will be deployed starting October 2021.

57. Plan Bleu/RAC has finalized in March 2021 an updated populated version of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard for monitoring the implementation of the MSSD. This version informs all indicators, including indicator 8 which has been lacking up to now: “proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels (SDG Indicator 14.4.1)” using as main reference the 2020 GFCM / State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries (SoMFi) report. Furthermore, the Dashboard, including data and maps, is hosted on a newly designed website obs.planbleu.org, until the migration to the UNEP central platform “World Environment Situation Room” is finalized. A pilot project to test the potential of the migration has been funded by the French agency ADEME and the French Ministry of Ecological Transition and successfully completed by May 2021 and regularly updated with new maps published in the cartographic viewer (MapX) of the UNEP/WESR. SCP/RAC undertook the update of the SCP indicators’ list to reflect this work within the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, strengthening the dashboard on green, blue and circular economies. All the information is gathered in the Regional Observatory of the Environment and Sustainable Development website, facilitating the access to information, including factsheets, publications, and thematic maps. Finally, Plan Bleu/RAC raised external funding to design a series of 9 thematic maps to illustrate the relationships between the state of environment and human activities. The series of maps contribute to

the 2023 MED QSR. They cover the following topics: 1. Impacts of leisure boating on coastal habitats (in particular the *Posidonia* herbarium); 2. Location of discharge points / outlets at sea (WWTP, industries, etc.) and fishing areas; 3. Impact of prospecting and offshore drilling of fossil products on areas of biological interest at sea; 4. Impact of offshore renewable energies (wind power) on migration corridors (birds); 5. Quality of surface water and coastal ecosystems in and around large coastal towns.

58. Plan Bleu/RAC is partner of the Blue Growth Interreg MED horizontal project (2019-2022), a consortium of 7 partners led by CoNISMa - Consorzio Nazionale Interuniversitario per le Scienze del Mare. In this second phase, Plan Bleu/RAC leads the Work Package on Capitalization activities. It will assist and coordinate the modular/integrated projects dealing with Blue Growth in their communication and capitalization activities, creating and ensuring internal (inter-community) and external synergies, knowledge sharing, transfer and capitalization for policy-making project recommendations take-on by key stakeholders (projects, SMEs, decision-makers, technicians, researchers, etc.). Plan Bleu/RAC contributed to the following main activities/outputs: (i) drafting of Guidelines for the mainstreaming of the Blue Growth Community (BGC) activities; (ii) organization of a 1st Capitalization event on Marine Renewable Energies (Teleconference, 10-11 November 2020); (iii) contribution to strategic liaising activities and to advocacy and lobbying activities.

59. Plan Bleu/RAC continues work on capitalization of good practices and the transfer of technology and knowledge developed in the Mediterranean region in the frame of the Interreg Med project “Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection community (MBPC)” (2019-2022). Plan Bleu/RAC leads the Work Package on Capitalization activities. Under the framework of the MBPC project, Plan Bleu/RAC contributes to the following main activities/outputs: (i) drafting of a technical factsheet on “Using Ecological sensitivity to guide Marine Renewable Energy potentials in the Mediterranean region”, (ii) organization of two capitalization events during the EU Green Week 2020 on “Healthy wetlands: our best natural answer to the biodiversity crises: The Mediterranean case” and 2021 on “Mediterranean solutions towards zero pollution impacts on biodiversity and health” with reports with key messages and recommendations from both events (iii) contribution to transferring and capitalization activities.

60. In view of ensuring that the 2023 MED QSR is based on IMAP reported data, particular attention has been paid on the further upgrade of the IMAP InfoSystem, and the provision of technical support to the Contracting Parties for the validation and upload of data. It is expected that the IMAP Info System will be fully operational to host data for all IMAP Common indicators by June 2022, which will allow Contracting Parties to report all the necessary data in time for the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR. In this respect and following relevant discussions during the Integrated CORMONs, an informal meeting was organized by the Secretariat with the Contracting Parties that are EU Member States in March 2021; the meeting reaffirmed the commitment for data submission required for the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR and raised some specific technical issues for which additional support from the Secretariat would be needed. In addition, the Secretariat undertook a preliminary mapping of relevant complementary sources, projects and partners for the development of 2023 MED QSR in line with identified data gaps, and organized a meeting with the identified partners in September 2021.

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

61. INFO/RAC, in consultation with MEDPOL, has successfully completed the migration process of the MEDPOL Info System database into IMAP Info System. The migration involved data corresponding to the information standards of IMAP Common Indicators 13-14 (eutrophication) and 17 (contaminants, sediment and biota). The monitoring data have been received from Mediterranean countries over the last 15 years from 2005 to 2015-2017 and include some MEDPOL Info System datasets dating back to the early 1990s, in compliance with the LBS Protocol. The entire dataset is now available on the IMAP system in a standardised format and stored on an infrastructure able to guarantee its integrity and preservation over time. The IMAP Info System will be able to accommodate the submission of new data sets for all Common Indicators by June 2022 for finalization of 2023 MED QSR.

62. The information standards related to the 11 Common Indicators selected for the pilot phase of the IMAP Info System, have been updated taking into account the criticalities found by the Countries during the testing phase of the system and the official call for the collection of monitoring data of the Mediterranean Countries has been launched in view of the next 2023 MED QSR that will have to be based essentially on monitoring data acquired according to the IMAP Data Standards and Data Dictionaries. In the IMAP Info System, the GIS standards for the Common Indicators related to hydrographic alterations induced by coastal and offshore infrastructures and to the level of coastal artificialization have also been updated.

63. Several activities have been initiated by SPA/RAC during this period: a new design and the updating of the content of the Marine Mediterranean Invasive Alien Species Database (MAMIAS) is underway; the new version of MAMIAS web application is available as beta version for internal testing purposes at <http://dev.mamias.org>; the development of a new web application for the Standard Data-entry Form will be done in house and will be available for testing in January 2022; the improvement of the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform (MBP) is underway and is expected to be ready for testing by end October 2021. The SPAMI Evaluation System web application has been developed and is being tested. It is expected to be fully operational by November 2021.

64. SCP/RAC has contributed to the Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on Green Entrepreneurship launched by UNDP. The course draws on the training methodology for green entrepreneurs developed by SCP/RAC, namely the Handbook for Green Entrepreneurs “Create your Green Business”. The course counts on the support from SCP/RAC, EcoEnterprises Fund, FaithInvest, Fordham University’s Gabelli School of Business, Lehigh University, SEED, and The GEF Small Grants Programme.

65. REMPEC Country Profiles were reviewed and updated by the beneficiary countries of the EU-funded West MOPoCo Project (i.e. Algeria, France, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Spain, and Tunisia as well as Monaco) together with their respective list of response equipment and experts on MEDGIS-MAR. In cooperation with the IMO, HELCOM, the Bonn Agreement, Cedre, Transport Canada, and the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, REMPEC finalised the revision and upgrade of the Maritime Integrated Decision Support Information System on Transport of Chemical Substances (MIDSIS-TROCS). REMPEC also launched a consultation process, through the Mediterranean Technical Working Group (MTWG), for the establishment of a Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean within the framework of the EU-funded West MOPoCo Project and produced a report on the outcome of the consultation process (survey), carried out through the MTWG, which was discussed at MEDEXPOL 2020 (Monaco, 27-29 October 2020). A concept note was presented to the 14th Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC, which agreed upon the use of the Common Emergency Communication and Information System for Marine Pollution (CECIS MP) by all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, as a Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean, for the request of assistance, and requested the Secretariat to liaise with the European Commission European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) to implement the agreed adaptations and to continue exploring, in consultation with Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, communication streamlining processes.

Strategic Outcome 1.6: Raised awareness and outreach

66. The content offered on the revamped UNEP/MAP website has continued to grow, including by the production of news items and features that deploy the UNEP/MAP narrative calling for a green recovery in the post-COVID era, also referred to as the green “renaissance”. Following the discussions held during the Meeting of the MAP Focal Points the term “green recovery in the Mediterranean” will be used in communication products.

67. Special features, factsheets and news articles were prepared with the support of the MAP Communication Taskforce to mark important events such as the International Day for Biological Diversity, World Environment Day and World Oceans Day. Visitors can gain access to an array of knowledge products newly listed under the ‘Resources’ section, including flagship reports and a set of new factsheets on cross-cutting themes (climate change, biodiversity, blue economy and pollution). A new section labelled “Sustainability Awards” presents the two MSSD flagship initiatives that reward

accomplishments by cities (Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award) and green entrepreneurs (WeMed Award). The rollout of the Arabic and French versions of the website is underway. Most viewed pages during the current period include 'Who we are' and 'What we do'. Visits are expected to further grow in the last quarter of 2021 as COP 22 approaches and interest rises from a broader range of audience groups.

68. The offerings of the website providing updates on the Secretariat's work and on progress achieved by Contracting Parties in several fields, including the implementation of projects and COP 21 decisions, have been shared proactively with media contacts, MAP partners and other stakeholders in the region, with a view to harnessing their own dissemination channels. This effort has sparked attention from several journalists, students and other stakeholders in the work of UNEP/MAP, and resulted in several enquiries that the Coordinating team has addressed with the support of the MAP Communication Taskforce. UNEP/MAP news also featured in prominent newsletters and websites in the Mediterranean, including those maintained by the UfM Secretariat, MEPIELAN, MIO-ECSDE and REVOLVE.

69. The UNEP/MAP twitter account (created in October 2019) has more than 1,300 followers, which gives UNEP/MAP access to the timelines and attention of an important audience group, including key Mediterranean institutions, policymakers, youth groups, civil society and the media, with an interest in the themes addressed by the UNEP/MAP- Barcelona Convention system. The account has acquired the "verified account" Twitter seal. 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, and the uptake of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols as a regional public good. INFO/RAC strengthened MAP's presence on Twitter and other social media platforms by producing high-quality content ranging from infographics to branded, visually pleasing cards to facilitate dissemination. Elegantly designed, these products increased UNEP/MAP content's likelihood of capturing social media users' attention in a competitive marketplace. This was coupled with a consistent use of hashtags with a view to creating a trail of messages that can be easily followed and shared.

70. With the support of the MAP Communication Taskforce, a presence is being secured for the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention System through the RACs' accounts on other social media platforms, including Facebook and LinkedIn. Consistent messaging and use of relevant hashtags (#BarcelonaConvention #Act4Med) on those platforms establish linkages between activities that RAC publicize on social media and the broader UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system's mandate.

71. The latest issues of the quarterly newsletter MED News of the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat were prepared by INFO/RAC based on an editorial programme agreed upon by the Editorial Board chaired by the Secretariat. The newsletter features a policy-oriented editorial by the Coordinator and presents readers with a curated assortment of updates from the Components. The published issues of January 2021, April 2021 and July 2021 are available on the INFO/RAC website. The MAP newsletter layout was revamped in 2021, providing a new appealing format for dissemination by e-mail. The process of enlargement of the audience and the involvement of Countries is ongoing.

72. With the support of the MAP Communication Taskforce, INFO/RAC designed and organised Digital Campaigns for UN Oceans Day, International Air Day, Mediterranean Coast Day, UN Biodiversity Day, Earth Hour, Raise Your Voice For Nature, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment on the occasion of International Woman Day, IUCN Congress and the dissemination of MAP's flagship publication, the SoED report. The campaigns included the development of specific initiatives aimed at the Mediterranean region, including dedicated web pages, key messages, articles on featured topics, online video libraries, storymaps and infographics, extensive networking with Mediterranean partners and countries, photo competitions, quizzes for children, vademecums on sustainable behaviour, online thematic dictionaries, and a video message from the Ambassador for the Coast on the occasion of the appointment. Two annual awareness raising campaigns organized at the occasion of the Mediterranean Coast Day (25 September) jointly by PAP/RAC and INFO/RAC with the Coordinating Unit providing advice and backstopping offered a lot of valuable information,

communication tools and opportunities to learn for the entire Mediterranean community (<https://coastday.net/>). The fact that many other institutions and projects have joined by organizing local face-to-face or broader online events on various themes related to sustainability of coastal regions can be considered as a great success of this 14-years old initiative promoted by PAP/RAC. The digital campaign rolled out by the MAP Communication Taskforce on Mediterranean Coast Day #MedCoastDay generated significant visibility on social media. Several Mediterranean institutions shared the slogan coined in 2020: “The Mediterranean needs you. If you put a seashell to your ear, you will hear it calling”. Mediterranean Coast Day was also observed in a reflection broadcasted on YouTube entitled “Time to draw a line in the sand: a reflection for healthier Mediterranean coasts” on 27 September 2021. The UNEP/MAP Coordinator also deployed key messages on this observance and the broader UNEP/MAP work as part of her participation in the high-level session of “Let’s Make the Mediterranean Blue”, an initiative of the EU4Ocean Coalition, which coincided with the celebration of the 2021 edition of Mediterranean Coast Day.

73. SoED was presented to representatives of international and regional media organisations on 21 October 2020 during a media briefing that the Secretariat co-organised with UNEP and the EC in the context of EU Green Week 2020. The Secretariat worked with UNEP on preparing a press release, issued on 19 October 2020 along with the press kit prepared by PB/RAC with support from the Coordinating Unit. The press release and kit capture the main findings of SoED and reiterate a call for a green renaissance in the Mediterranean, based on evidence contained in the report. SoED has received global attention when the Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General mentioned the report in the daily noon briefing and through coverage on the UN website and social media accounts. In addition, the Secretariat received a request to upload SoED on the global UN iLibrary, which offers the report in English and French to a large global audience. The Secretariat delivered, with PB/RAC and the support of the MAP Communication Taskforce, a system-wide communication plan on SoED, increasing the report’s visibility. Several journalists came forward with requests for interviews; ERT (Greece) and Casa Mediterraneo (Spain) were granted interviews by the coordinator on themes related to SoED findings. PB/RAC organized an event on the launch of the French version of SoED during the Med2020 science-policy videoconference (16-18 November 2020), with substantial discussion between scientists and policymakers for filling knowledge gaps identified in SoED. The Med2020 conference gathered more than 280 scientists and decision-makers. On 16 February 2021, PB/RAC co-organized with the Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment of Tunisia, with the contribution of SPA/RAC and support by ADEME, a national dissemination event on SoED, focusing on decentralisation, development planning, and integrated sustainable development approach in Tunisia.

74. On 14 December 2020, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), in cooperation with the Secretariat, organized an online encounter with its members and with lawmakers from across the region. Titled “Supporting the Science-Policy Interface for a green renaissance in the Mediterranean”, the meeting provided participating parliamentarians with insights into climate and environmental change in the region. The Coordinator reported on initiatives for science-policy interface within the MAP – Barcelona Convention system, and the PB/RAC director presented the MedECC First Mediterranean Assessment Report and its key findings, and the SoED.

75. The Secretariat celebrated the International Women’s Day (8 March) during this biennium. Marking the 2021 edition of International Women’s Day, the Secretariat published a special feature, prepared in cooperation with SCP/RAC and SPA/RAC. “Sheroes of sustainability in the Mediterranean” is a compilation of six stories highlighting the accomplishments of some of the everyday female heroes who embody the principles enshrined in the Barcelona Convention through their work. This was complemented by an article introducing gender mainstreaming in the GEF-funded MedProgramme implemented by MAP.

76. On 8 April 2021, a panel discussion titled “Making peace with nature and delivering on the SDGs in the Mediterranean” was organized within the framework of the Geneva Environment Network jointly with UNEP Europe Office. Considering the Mediterranean as a region at the crossroads, this virtual event shed light on the findings of the ‘twin reports’ sponsored by the UNEP/MAP (namely SoED and MedECC MAR1) and served as a platform to advocate for a post-COVID green renaissance centered around the SDGs and driven by a greater compliance with, and enforcement of the Barcelona

Convention and its Protocols. The narrative prepared for this event, which will remain accessible from the Geneva Environment Network website along with the session's recording, is an important asset in the UNEP/MAP pro-sustainability advocacy endeavour.

77. Having organized a MAP system-wide participation in the workshop titled "Paving the way for collective Ocean Literacy initiatives in the Mediterranean Sea", which coincided with Mediterranean Coast Day on 25 September 2021, the Secretariat continues to take part in activities organized as part of the EU4Ocean Platform with a view to engage with partners in coordinated "Mediterranean literacy" initiatives and to deploy the UNEP/MAP narrative as part of outreach and advocacy. The Secretariat notably contributed to the first preparatory meeting on the concept of an "Ocean Literacy Mediterranean Network" on 11 May 2021.

78. UNEP/MAP, including the Coordinating Unit and several MAP Components, joined forces with regional organizations to share with the world conservation community the latest nature conservation initiatives in the Mediterranean, reflect on the challenges and identify solutions, in the context of the IUCN Congress (3-11 September 2021). Several joint events took place in the "Mediterranean Solutions stand" with the support of the MAVA Foundation. The official programme of the Mediterranean Solutions stand included several sessions involving representatives of the UNEP/MAP system. It also included a one-day event on 4 September 2021 titled "High time to act for our Mediterranean", coordinated by SPA/RAC. This event was opened by the MAP Coordinator, and closed by Dr. Carlo Zaghi, President of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

79. Since May 2020, the Secretariat participated in the monthly meetings of the UNEP Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) Coordination Group, established by the Marine and Fresh Water Branch, Ecosystems Division. Working with Regional Seas and other partners, this group supports the UNEP's Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative, which aims to facilitate sustainable ocean-based economic, social and environmental benefits. An important focus of the initiative is to support UNEP's strategic response to COVID-19, building a recovery that uses oceans within safe operating space of planet for humanity and helps deliver the Paris Agreement on climate change.

80. The Secretariat, including UNEP/MAP Components (MED POL and SPA/RAC), contributed to the preparation of the SDG14 Regional Seas Report in view of the next UN Ocean Conference. Mediterranean cases studies related to the Marine Litter Regional Plan and the Roadmap towards an ecologically representative and efficiently managed network of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas are included in that report and detailed in its supplementary annex.

81. The Secretariat received accreditation to the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference). Process is ongoing to secure the same status to other events and processes such as the UN Ocean Conference.

82. The Secretariat contributed with substantial inputs, based on commitments of the Naples Ministerial Declaration and other relevant UNEP/MAP strategic documents, to the UfM consultation on common post-2020 priority thematic areas for the UfM Environment and Climate Action Agenda. The Secretariat, including UNEP/MAP Components, also contributed to the UfM consultation on the Blue Economy towards the preparation of the Second UfM Ministerial Meeting on Blue Economy.

83. The Secretariat closely collaborated with SDSN Med-University of Siena, Italy in the context of their "Call For Submissions of Youth Solutions for the SDGs: Mediterranean Youth Solutions Report". The SDSN Med Youth Solutions Report 2021 will address students, young innovators and researchers from the Mediterranean region, in order to display transformative, youth-led solution projects contributing to the achievement of the SDGs in the Mediterranean.

84. During this reporting period, the Regional Activity Centres and MED POL have also promoted awareness, outreach and visibility of the MAP-Barcelona Convention systems. Detailed reporting on related activities is presented in the progress reports submitted to the Bureau meetings of the current biennium, as well as in the Bureau Meeting Reports (UNEP/MED IG.25/Inf.3). On 3 September,

REMPEC launched the video on the designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides (Med SO_x ECA) pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI, developed within the framework of the Barcelona Convention. REMPEC progressed on the preparation of a video on the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) co-financed by the IMO's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP), to be launched at COP22.

85. During the INFO/RAC Focal Points meeting the video on the Information and Communication Regional Activity Centre was launched in order to increase the MAP visibility and explain in more communicative way the mandate and the activities carried out by the Centre.

86. The Coordinating Unit has produced the "Young Person's Guide to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols" with support from the MAP Communication Taskforce, in addition to core set of messages aimed at raising awareness of microplastics in the Mediterranean. The "Resources" section of the UNEP/MAP website also offers a ready-to-use toolkit, consisting of reports, factsheets and infographics, for partners and stakeholders wishing to organize their own information sessions and outreach events to promote sustainability and ways to live in harmony with nature in the Mediterranean.

87. UNEP/MAP participated in the EU4Ocean Coalition for Ocean Literacy's event titled "Let's Make the Mediterranean Blue" from 24-27 September 2021. The multi-day event involved youth activities, educational programmes and a Mediterranean Ocean Literacy Festival, as well as a high-level panel. It was organized around Mediterranean Coast Day (25 September) and involved consultations between UNEP/MAP and ACTeon, the Coordinator of the EU4Ocean Coalition for Ocean Literacy. It was rolled out as a combination of in-person and online sessions, including an opening ceremony on 24 September and a high-level panel on 27 September that the UNEP/MAP Coordinator attended. In the high-level session, the UNEP/MAP Coordinator spoke alongside fellow panelists Maria Damanaki, former EU Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and Karmenu Vella, former EU Commissioner of the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

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

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

88. On 13 May 2021, Cyprus announced to the Secretariat, the ratification of "The Implementation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of Israel on the sub-regional marine oil pollution contingency plan", following the "Joint Declaration of Intent on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection" signed between Cyprus, Greece and Israel on 6 April 2016. The organisation of the Sub-Regional Training and the meeting of the national operational authorities responsible for the implementation of the Plan, will be held between 5 and 7 October 2021.

89. A number of activities were implemented within the framework of the EU-funded West MOPoCo project, including: the preparation of a first draft Study, led by France, aimed at identifying and establishing operational and administrative synergies between existing sub-regional agreements in place in the Western Mediterranean region; the Inter-regional HNS response published in April 2021 and disseminated to REMPEC, HELCOM and the Bonn Agreement; the manual and tools to evaluate oil spill management capabilities introduced in 2019 were used by Algeria, France, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Spain, and Tunisia to develop respective self-assessments of the level of preparedness to respond to marine oil; the template for the Manuals on National Mechanisms for the mobilisation of response equipment and experts in case of emergency, supervised the completion of the assessment by Algeria, Malta, Morocco Spain, and Tunisia and assisted the completion by France and Italy, whilst suggesting it to Monaco. The 14th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Teleconference, 31 May- 2 June 2021) agreed upon the use of the Template for the development of the Manuals on national mechanisms for the mobilisation of response equipment and experts, in case of emergency, as laid down in the Appendix to document REMPEC/WG.51/9/3.

90. Further to the announcement by PAP/RAC of the signature of CAMP Bosnia and Herzegovina, REMPEC relaunched the activity for the development of the National Contingency Plan (NCP) of Bosnia and Herzegovina. A National training and the 1st Meeting for the development of the National Contingency Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a National Tabletop Oil Spill Response Exercise “ExNeum 2021” and the 2nd and 3rd Meeting for the development of the NCP were organized by REMPEC, in Neum, on 27-28 April 2021, 30 June-1 July 2021, and 28-29 September 2021, respectively. The activities were also launched to support the implementation of CAMP activities related to IMAP Pollution and Marine Litter Cluster.

91. REMPEC also renewed its agreements with Sea Alarm, FEDERCHIMICA and Cedre, within the Mediterranean Assistance Unit, and initiated the renewal process with other MAU Members, i.e. the Mediterranean Operational Network for the Global Ocean Observing System (MONGOOS). REMPEC is exploring a new agreement with CMCC, Orbitaleos and Orion to provide combined satellite and forecasting model services to Contracting Parties. In accordance with Decision IG 3/5, the MAU special revolving fund reached a level equivalent to the average expenses of a one-month mission, this was possible by using COVID-19 savings to complete funds used for the mobilization of MAU experts in Lebanon, as detailed below.

92. The MAU was activated to provide remote expertise to Israel in March 2021. On 9 March 2021, REMPEC received a request for assistance from the Lebanese authorities regarding the oil spill incident affecting the Lebanese shoreline since 22 February 2021. Upon receipt of the request for assistance, under UNEP leadership, a coordination team was established involving representatives from the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC), UNEP, United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), UNDP, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UNHABITAT) and REMPEC. REMPEC deployed onsite two MAU experts from the Adriatic Training and Research Centre for Accidental Marine Pollution Preparedness and Response (ATRAC) from 23 March to 2 April 2021. The objectives of the ten-day mission were to assess the extent of the pollution, assist national and local authorities in ongoing clean-up and remediation operations, and to provide guidance on oiled waste management. A follow-up, financed through the IMO’s Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP) included an online training course for supervisor of clean-up operation organized on 24-25 June 2021. On 23rd August 2021, a leak occurred from one of the fuel tanks at the Baniyas thermal station as a result of cracks and wear that led to the leakage of fuel into the sea. According to the Syrian competent authorities, the damaged tank, contained 12,000 m³ of fuel, out of which an amount yet to be confirmed was pumped into nearby reservoirs. Part of the fuel was contained whilst the rest leaked into the sea. On Wednesday 25th August, REMPEC was informed about the incident by the Syrian competent authorities. The Syrian authorities informed REMPEC that cleaning operations were undertaken on the affected areas with limited capacity and requested assistance to REMPEC to support the response operations. REMPEC activated the Mediterranean Operational Network for the Global Ocean Observing System (MONGOOS), member of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit (MAU) for the provision of regular simulation and prediction of the movement of the spill, until 14 September 2021. REMPEC has been continuously in contact with the Syrian competent authority. On Friday 27 August 2021, REMPEC notified the incident to the neighbouring countries, i.e. Cyprus, Israel, Lebanon and Turkey and provided regular forecast updates. On Monday 30 August 2021, a crisis management meeting was organized and attended by representatives of the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment, UNEP/West Asia, UNEP/MAP, IMO and REMPEC. The objectives of the meeting were to obtain updated information on the pollution, the impacted areas, measures undertaken by the Syrian Government and REMPEC and to define the course of action. REMPEC has been in contact with Cyprus and Turkey to assess the situation, ascertain the arrival of oil on the Cypriot island, take stock of the preventive measure undertaken by the individual coastal States, and endeavour coordination of efforts. Cyprus mobilised the EMSA vessel “Alexandria”, and requested REMPEC to notify Greece and Israel about the potential activation of the Sub-regional Marine Oil Pollution Contingency Plan between Cyprus, Greece and Israel, subject to the evolution of the situation, within the next days. A request of assistance was also sent to SPA/RAC, which responded positively for a deployment onsite to be coordinated with REMPEC. At the time of drafting this report, the mission had not been confirmed by the Competent authorities.

93. The Fourth Meeting of the Mediterranean Network of Law Enforcement Officials relating to MARPOL within the framework of the Barcelona Convention (MENELAS), was organised remotely by REMPEC on 21 and 22 April 2021, and agreed upon a set of conclusions and recommendations paving the way towards the finalisation of a common marine oil pollution detection/investigation report, to facilitate exchanges between Mediterranean coastal states and support judicial procedures, as well as a decision to apply, across the Mediterranean region, criteria for a common minimum level of fines for each offense provided for under the Annexes to MARPOL. The meeting also agreed to explore how to develop the modalities of possible creation and operation, including in terms of governance and financing, of a regional “Blue Fund”, which could be made up of part of the fines from illicit ship pollution discharges collected by Mediterranean coastal States. The 14th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC agreed to invite Mediterranean coastal States to participate in the forthcoming coordinated aerial surveillance operation for illicit ship pollution discharges in the Mediterranean (OSCAR-MED), as appropriate. The report on the activities of MENELAS is presented in information document UNEP/MED IG.25/Inf.8.

94. UNEP/MAP Secretariat is in the advisory board of the Water and Environment Support (EU-funded WES project). The WES project aims to increase capacity of stakeholders in formulating and implementing the environmental and water policies. In collaboration with the WES Project, MED POL undertook individual countries’ surveys (participating in the WES Project) on the status of urban storm water management in the Mediterranean with a focus on storm water management plans; risk management; design, operation and maintenance aspects; run-off water, sustainable design elements; availability of technical standards, and regulatory measures governing design, operation and maintenance of urban storm water networks in the Mediterranean.

95. SCP/RAC was highly involved in the organization of a regional training on Single-Use Plastics Products (SUPs) under the WES Project, composed of 4 webinars that took place between January and February 2021 in order to identify, prioritise and operationalise targeted measures to phase-out single-use plastics (SUPs). A parallel regional peer-to-peer (P2P) activity of WES on the same topic was launched in November 2020. The overall objective of the P2P activity was to reinforce capacity, support the sharing of experiences and expertise and stimulate cooperation among the peers for the implementation of measures to reduce consumption and leakage of SUPs into the environment. Two P2P sessions took place on 9 November 2020 and 10 December 2020, and the exchange continued until March 2021. The webinars and P2P process contributed to the development of the Regional Guidelines on measures to phase out Single-Use Plastic items as contribution to the implementation of the Marine Litter Regional Plan.

96. SCP/RAC is currently contributing to the organization of a regional training on Awareness raising and Education for sustainable development / training of trainers on campaign for sustainable consumption. The activity will more particularly focus on sustainable consumption and food as well as sustainable consumption and packaging. The first 2 modules were organized in July and September. The third one will take place online in October 2021.

97. MED POL started the implementation of the work plan of activities regarding the management and disposal of POPs - PCBs (phase 1) for Child Project 1.1 of the MedProgramme (in Lebanon and Algeria).

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

98. In line with the mandate provided by COP21, MEDPOL supported the establishment and the work of the Working Groups to develop proposals for updating three Annexes of the LBS Protocol and the Annex to the Dumping Protocol. The Meetings of the Working Group of Experts on Updating the Annexes to the LBS Protocol held remotely on 10 December 2020 and the meeting of the Working Group to update the Annex to the Dumping Protocol was held on 9 February 2021. The outcome of this work was submitted to MED POL Focal Points meeting held on 27-28 May 2021 that endorsed the proposed amendments to the Annexes to the LBS Protocol and the Dumping Protocol, which were then submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting in September 2021, which agreed to transmit them to COP 22 for adoption (documents UNEP/MED IG.25/8 and IG.25/9).

99. With the view to formulating the Regional Plans on Urban Wastewater Treatment, and Management of Sludge, MED POL supported the establishment of a Working Group of experts to develop and review the draft plans. The first meeting of the Working Group was held on 9-10 December 2020 and the second meeting was held on 25 May 2021. The final versions of the Regional Plans were reviewed and agreed by the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points Meeting (27-28 May 2021), and then submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting in September 2021, which agreed to transmit them to COP 22 for adoption (document UNEP/MED IG.25/11).

100. With the view to updating the Regional Plan on the management of the Marine Litter in the Mediterranean, MED POL supported the establishment and the operation of the Working Group of Experts. The Working group had two meetings, the first on 31 March and 1 April 2021 and the second on 26 May 2021. The outcome of the second meeting was reviewed and endorsed by the MED POL Focal Points meeting held on 27-28 May 2021, and then submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting in September 2021, which agreed to transmit it to COP 22 for adoption (document UNEP/MED IG.25/12).

101. SCP/RAC prepared technical Guidelines to tackle single use plastic items through a large consultation process. These guidelines are relevant for the implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management, in particular Article 9 on prevention measures and associated national efforts to combatting plastic pollution.

102. MED POL developed three guiding documents: “Guideline on estimation techniques and applied methodologies for non-point sources release from agriculture “(UNEP/MED WG.509/35); “Guideline on estimation techniques and applied methodologies for point source releases from aquaculture” (UNEP/MED WG. 509/36) and “Guideline on estimation techniques and applied methodologies for non-point sources release from catchment runoffs” (UNEP/MED WG. 509/37), aiming to complement the NBB/PRTR Methodology to address diffuse sources. Developed documents were submitted to the MEDPOL FPs Meeting scheduled on 6-7 October 2021 for approval.

103. MED POL developed “Common methodologies and techniques for the assessment and monitoring of adverse impacts of dumping activities” (UNEP/MED WG. 509/41) and “Compendium of Best Practices for Implementation of Dumping Protocol” (UNEP/MED WG 509/42) which were submitted to the MED POL Focal Points Meeting scheduled on 6-7 October 2021.

104. The Secretariat in cooperation with REMPEC organised the Third Meeting of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (OFOG) Sub-Group on the Environmental Impact (Teleconference, 3-4 June 2021). The OFOG meeting examined and agreed upon the revised draft Mediterranean Offshore Guidelines for the Conduct of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the amended Annexes to the Mediterranean Offshore Protocol, and the activities proposed in the Programme of Work for the biennium 2022-2023. The MAP Focal Points Meeting examined the draft decision IG.25/15 on the Mediterranean Offshore Guidelines for the Conduct of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and IG.25/7 on the amended Annexes to the Mediterranean Offshore Protocol and endorsed the said Decisions, as amended by the Meeting. REMPEC initiated the process for the organization of an online workshop on the Common Standards and Guidance on the Disposal of Oil and Oily Mixtures and the Use and Disposal of Drilling Fluids and Cuttings (Decision IG. 24/9 Annex a) adopted by COP 21 in 2019, to be held tentatively end November or early December 2021. REMPEC invited OFOG members to attend UNEP's Norwegian Oil for Development Partnership's global webinar series, on “Available technologies that contribute to climate mitigation in upstream oil and gas production” (online, 6 July 2021) and on “Decommissioning oil and gas fields: Best environmental practices” (online, 19 October 2021).

105. The preparation of the Study on Condensate spills and the related proposed “Condensates – Chemical Intervention Guide” was examined by the 14th Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC, which agreed to extend the period of implementation for its consideration and adoption at the next Focal Point Meeting in 2023. The HNS Inter-regional Response Manual developed by REMPEC, in cooperation with the Bonn Agreement, HELCOM, in the framework of the EU-funded WestMOPoCo Project was adopted by the 14th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC and will be submitted to the IMO to the 9th session of the IMO Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR), to

contribute to the development of an international operational guide on the response to spills of Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS)", in the framework of the PPR.

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

106. COP 19 requested the Secretariat to undertake in 2020 an indicator-based midterm evaluation of the NAPs' implementation based on the existing reporting system and in close collaboration with the Contracting Parties. MED POL has developed the Midterm Evaluation Report of the NAPs' Implementation using data and information sources selected in line with the NAP/H2020 indicators further to their availability in various technical studies and reports. Subsequently, the Midterm Evaluation was reviewed and agreed during the Meeting on National Baseline Budget Methodologies, Assessments of new Regional Plans and Evaluation of National Action Plans under the LBS Protocol held on 22-23 April 2021.

107. SCP/RAC provided support to Tunisia for shaping a communication strategy following the publication of the decree to ban single use plastic bags in the countries. The support was requested by Tunisia. In the framework of the WES project, SCP/RAC is providing technical support for the implementation of the following activities: (i) Morocco: Joint initiative for the establishment of a System for the management of PET Bottles through an EPR Scheme, (ii) Lebanon: Policy support to address single-use plastic items (pending of approval) and (iii) Jordan: Development of a joint public-private roadmap to transition to reduce the use of Single-Use Plastics. Activities were validated by the EC and kicked-off in May 2021 in Jordan and Morocco. SCP/RAC also started the implementation of the work plan of activities regarding new POPs and Mercury for Child Project 1.1 of the MedProgramme (including legal support to Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia). Furthermore, SCP/RAC prepared a concept note for the development of an initiative for the local management of organic waste to move towards circular economy in that sector in Morocco. Initial discussion took place with the SCP/RAC Focal Point and the expertise of the Catalan Waste Agency has been mobilised. However, given the current context (COVID-19 Pandemic), it was decided with the SCP/RAC Focal Point to postpone this activity at a later stage and focus on the contribution to on-going efforts led by the MoE of Morocco, in particular related to the establishment of an EPR scheme which is a key tool for Circular Economy.

108. The National Action Plan for the implementation of the Regional Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2016-2021) was completed by Egypt; similar plans had been developed by Albania, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey.

109. The Coordinating Unit and REMPEC, in consultation with IMO, continued exploring synergies, between the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean and the IMO Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships, through a continuous dialogue between UNEP/MAP and IMO, through REMPEC, to establish synergies between the (EU-funded) "Marine Litter-Med II" Project and the IMO-FAO-Norway GloLitter Partnerships Project.

Strategic Outcome 2.4: Marine Pollution Monitoring and Assessment

110. To support the development of new Regional Plans for agriculture, aquaculture, and urban storm water management, MED POL delivered the three respective assessments to the "Meeting on Evaluation of Implementation of National Action Plans and Assessments, and Tools to Estimate Pollutants Loads from Diffuse Sources" (22-23 April 2021). The Meeting reviewed the draft assessment documents and provided its comments and inputs, recommending submission of the agreed drafts to the MED POL Focal Points Meeting for their approval "to use as a background document" for preparation of the corresponding Regional Plans.

111. Work is in progress for operationalization of the means aimed at supporting implementation of the national IMAPs, including assistance through implementation of IMAP-MPA and GEF Adriatic Projects. The most important findings on present status of IMAP implementation at national level served as a basis for proposing integration and aggregation rules for monitoring and assessment for IMAP Pollution and Marine Litter Cluster that is an important milestone for setting the GES integrated

assessment methodologies for EOs 5, 9 and 10 within implementation of the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap. The initial proposal for assignment to the most appropriate scales of assessment of elements to be assessed for IMAP Pollution and Marine Litter Cluster, as agreed by the CORMON Meeting on Pollution Monitoring organized in 2019 and the 7th Meeting of EcAp Coordination Group, was elaborated for consideration of the Meeting of CorMon on Pollution Monitoring (26-28 April, 2021). The work is ongoing and hopefully the successful application and testing of the proposed methodology on a pilot basis by the end of 2021 and in early 2022 would provide Contracting Parties with clear guidance on how to set assessment area and aim at undertaking integrated assessment. This would allow expanding the use of this methodology as appropriate to support integrated assessment in other clusters of IMAP.

112. Actions were undertaken to identify specific knowledge and technical needs of individual laboratories of the Contracting Parties to apply good practices for analysis of trace elements and organic contaminants. Along with the missions to two IMAP Pollution Cluster competent laboratories realized in 2020, the capacities of national laboratories in relation to monitoring of IMAP Common Indicators 13, 14, 17, 18 and 20 were assessed. The assessment findings related to 36 national IMAP Pollution Cluster competent laboratories refer to their capacities to apply the analytical methodologies, as recommended in relevant IMAP Monitoring Guidelines/Protocols. They were considered by the CORMON meeting on Pollution Monitoring (26-28 April 2021). Although only 7 Contracting Parties provided feedback for their IMAP Pollution competent laboratories, this exercise gave a good insight into their capability to comply with IMAP Guidance Factsheets and new Monitoring Guidelines/Protocols and problems laboratories face. The specific knowledge and technical needs of individual laboratories were recognized on implementing IMAP CIs 13, 14, 17, 18 and 20.

113. The Meeting of CORMON Marine Litter (30 March 2021) agreed on the updated Baseline Values (BV) and proposed Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP Common Indicator 22 (beach marine litter), as provided in the Meeting document UNEP/MED WG.509/11 and recommended their submission for consideration of the Meeting of MED POL Focal Points. This document elaborates the conceptual and methodological approaches for defining BV and TV that are then applied for updating/proposing BVs and TVs in order to ensure a progress towards integrated GES assessment of EO10.

114. Further to the 2019 update of the sub-regional Mediterranean BAC values for heavy metals in biota and sediment, in 2021 MEDPOL has undertaken further actions to upgrade the assessment criteria. The proposals for upgrading the BC and BAC values for IMAP Common Indicator 17 and possible approaches for upgrade of EAC for IMAP Common Indicators 17, 18 and 20 were considered by the CORMON Meeting on Pollution Monitoring (26-28 April 2021), the Meeting of MEDPOL Focal Points (27-28 May and 6-7 October 2021) and the 8th Meeting of the EcAp Coordination Group (9 September 2021). Their upgrade is based on new national monitoring data that have not been previously used. In relation to the development of region-wide harmonized criteria for reference conditions and threshold/boundaries values for key nutrients in water column (requested through Decision IG.23/6), the proposals for i) setting the reference conditions and boundary values for Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen (DIN) and Total Phosphorous (TP); and ii) testing practical application of the methodological approaches for their calculation in relevant sub-areas were considered by the CORMON Meeting on Pollution Monitoring (26-28 April 2021). These proposals were submitted for consideration of the Meeting of MEDPOL Focal Points (27-28 May and 6-7 October 2021) and the 8th Meeting of the EcAp Coordination Group (9 September 2021), acknowledging at the same time their evolving nature.

115. The revised IMAP Guidance Factsheets for the Common Indicators 19 (CI19) and 6 (CI6), prepared by REMPEC in consultation with SPA/RAC, were submitted to the CORMON Meeting, under document UNEP/MED WG. 482/21. The revised documents were shared with the members of the Online Working Group (OWG), the 14th Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC and the 15th Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points and were discussed during the CORMON Meeting.

116. The CORMON Marine Litter meeting was held on 30 March 2021 via videoconference, with the aim to review the regional operational strategy for monitoring IMAP Candidate Indicator 24; address

the interrelation of pressures impacts of marine litter and the status of marine ecosystem components; and analyze the potential complementarities and synergies between IMAP and the EC's new GES Decision (2017/848/EU) for marine litter. The CORMON Pollution meeting was held on 26-28 April 2021, via videoconference, with the aim to review and approve the monitoring guidelines for CI 18, the monitoring guidelines/protocols for Quality Assurance and Reporting of Monitoring Data for CI 13, 14, 17, 18 and 20; the state of play of inter-laboratory testing and good laboratory practice related to CI 5 and 9; the integration and aggregation rules for EO5, 9, and 10; and the assessment criteria for contaminants and nutrients.

117. In collaboration of the Marine Environmental Studies Laboratory (MESL) of the International Atomic Energy Agency and MED POL the 2019 and 2020 Proficiency Tests (PTs) were organized, along with related Training Courses on the analysis of trace elements and organic pollutants in marine samples. As a result, actions were taken to identify specific knowledge and technical needs of individual laboratories aiming to apply good laboratory practices for analysis of trace elements and organic contaminants. The results achieved in 2019 and 2020 Proficiency Tests were considered by the CORMON Meeting on Pollution Monitoring and related recommendations were provided on the way forward; the meeting recommended strengthening the present scope of the quality assurance for CI 17, as well as setting of inter-laboratory comparison for eutrophication (CIs 13 and 14) and biomarkers (CI 18).

118. MED POL prepared 19 Monitoring Guidelines related to IMAP Common Indicators 13, 14, 17, 18 and 20 and Analytical Quality Assurance and Reporting Monitoring Data. The Monitoring Guideline are composed of 98 specific Protocols prepared to support standardization and harmonization of the procedures for all the steps of analytical chain. Following on their acceptance by the Integrated Meetings of the CORMONs (1-3 December 2020) and the CORMON Meeting on Pollution Monitoring (26-28 April, 2021), they were submitted for approval for their use by the Meeting of MED POL Focal Points (27-28 May and 6-7 October 2021) and the 8th Meeting of the EcAp Coordination Group (9 September 2021). These Monitoring Guidelines present coherent manuals to guide technical personnel of IMAP competent laboratories of the Contracting Parties for the implementation of the standardized and harmonized monitoring practices related to the analytical procedures of sampling, sample preservation and transportation, sample preparation and analysis, along with the quality assurance and reporting of monitoring data for IMAP Common Indicators 13,14, 17, 18 and 20. Regarding marine litter IMAP Common Indicators, methodological elements for monitoring floating microplastics were reviewed by the Integrated CORMON Meetings. In addition, the Regional Operational Strategy for Candidate Common Indicator 24 was reviewed by the Meeting of the CORMON on Marine Litter Monitoring.

119. In line with COP Decisions IG.22/7 and IG.23/6, the call has been opened in June 2020 for the Contracting Parties to start uploading and sharing their monitoring data which conform with the approved Data Dictionaries and Data Standards for 11 selected IMAP Common Indicators, respectively CI 1, 2, 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22 and 23. Accordingly, the Contracting Parties started to report data with the aim to report all pending data by September 2020 at the latest, and new 2020 monitoring data no later than 31 January 2021. However, only a few new data sets have been validated for IMAP Common Indicators 13,14,17, 21, 22 and 23. It must also be noted that present level of data reporting by the Contracting Parties is not adequate and if this situation persists, it will create serious difficulties to 2023 MED QSR preparation.

120. Specific technical support was provided from INFO/RAC, with contribution of MED POL, in order to facilitated data reporting, whereas more substantial assistance to the countries is planned from INFO/RAC in the upcoming biennium to strengthen national capacities for data control and reporting and to increase national capacities to report data into IMAP Info System.

121. REMPEC elaborated a Study on trends and outlook of marine pollution, maritime traffic, and offshore activities in the Mediterranean, which was presented at the 14th Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC, which requested the Secretariat to carry out editorial adjustment for its publication.

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

122. The Regional Workshop to enhance Marine Oil and HNS regional cooperation in the Mediterranean (MEDEXPOL 2020) originally to be held in Monaco, from 27 to 29 October 2020, was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, to present and discuss deliverables of the project for further integration at Mediterranean level. REMPEC initiated the preparation of the Sub-regional Workshop on the assessment of the level of oil spill response planning and readiness management, which will be held remotely in September 2021. REMPEC completed the preparation of the Sub-regional training and Second Meeting of the national operational authorities responsible for the implementation of the Sub-regional marine oil pollution contingency plan between Cyprus, Greece, and Israel (5-7 October 2021). The organization of the Sub-regional training and Sixth Meeting of the national operational authorities responsible for the implementation of the Sub-regional contingency plan of the south-west Mediterranean between Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia (November 2021), is under consideration. The Sub-regional Workshop on the assessment of the level of oil spill response planning and readiness management for the Central and Eastern Mediterranean, financed by the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP) was organised online by REMPEC between 7 and 8 September 2021. Country-specific online sessions will be organised for each Central and Eastern Mediterranean country, between 21 September and 4 November 2021, to complete the assessment through personalised support provided by REMPEC lecturers. The closing session, scheduled on 23 November 2021, will review the outcome of the country-specific sessions, and define the way forward to develop and implement improvement programme.

123. SCP/RAC kickstarted of activities under the Medprogramme with Morocco, Lebanon and Tunisia on prevention approaches to substitute the current use of PFOS, HBCD and PVC in the selected industries and mercury used in medical devices. In the framework of the WES project, SCP/RAC kicked-off a pilot activity to promote circular economy in higher education in Algeria, together with CNFE. The activity will particularly target Boumerdes University.

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

124. In accordance with Decision IG.24/8 on the Road Map for a Proposal for the Possible Designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides (Med SO_x ECA) Pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI, within the Framework of the Barcelona Convention, REMPEC, in cooperation with MED POL and the Plan Bleu/RAC, has been overseeing the implementation of the road map under the guidance of the SO_x ECA(s) Technical Committee of Experts since its adoption at COP 21. In line with the agreed road map, the necessary knowledge gathering was completed and the further studies were carried out to more fully address the criteria and procedures for designation of emission control areas laid down in Appendix III to MARPOL Annex VI, through consultancy services that covered LOT 1 (updating of the initial draft submission to the IMO), LOT 2 (land-based emissions control measures of SO_x and Particulate Matter (PM) in the Mediterranean coastal States), LOT 3 (analysis of fuel supply and alternative compliance methods) and LOT 4 (additional economic impact evaluation), the terms of reference of which were developed by the Secretariat and agreed by the SO_x ECA(s) Technical Committee of Experts in June 2020. Further to the submission of the first deliverables as scheduled in September 2020, for consultation through the SO_x ECA(s) Technical Committee of Experts, revised deliverables were submitted to the said committee for feedback and comments in January 2021. The final deliverables, which took into account the feedback and comments received from the SO_x ECA(s) Technical Committee of Experts, were discussed at the Regional Expert Meeting on the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides (Med SO_x ECA) pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI (Teleconference, 27-28 April 2021) organised by REMPEC. The meeting adopted a set of conclusions and recommendations, which were submitted and considered favourably by the 14th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Teleconference, 31 May-2 June 2021). REMPEC also submitted an information document to the seventy-sixth (76th) session of the IMO's MEPC (MEPC 76) (Teleconference, 10-17 June 2021), which provided information on the adoption and implementation of the road map.

125. Three National Workshops (virtual) on Ratification and Effective Implementation of MARPOL

Annex VI, for Egypt (25 November 2020), Algeria (26 November 2020), and Lebanon (10 December 2020), financed by the MTF and the IMO's ITCP, were organised by REMPEC in line with the road map to support the implementation and ratification processes. These activities completed the organisation of similar events in Albania (Durrës, 25-26 November 2019), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo, 28-29 November 2019) and Libya (Tunis, Tunisia, 5-6 December 2019). A similar event is envisaged to be organised for Israel in the second semester of 2021.

126. The Fourteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Teleconference, 31 May-2 June 2021) concurred with the conclusions and recommendations of the Regional Expert Meeting on the possible designation of the Med SOx ECA, as laid down in document REMPEC/WG.51/INF.9, in particular the initial discussion held on the effective date of entry into force of the proposed Med SOx ECA as well as the information shared on the progress made by Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention that had not yet ratified MARPOL Annex VI. The meeting agreed to take the draft joint and coordinated proposal on the designation of the Med SOx ECA, as set out in the Appendix to document REMPEC/WG.51/7, as a basis for the possible submission of a joint and coordinated proposal for the designation of the proposed Med SOx ECA to the IMO, in line with the road map, and requested the Secretariat to address pending issues in the said proposal with a view to facilitating the further process. The meeting examined and endorsed the draft proposal. The related Decision IG.25/14 presented in document UNEP/MED IG.25/17 was submitted to, and examined by the Meeting of the MAP Focal Points, which approved the said Decision, as amended by the meeting. REMPEC will launch a process to assess the specific needs of Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, which are not yet parties to MARPOL Annex VI, to draw a plan of activities, including potential infrastructure investments. Furthermore, with the support of an expert, REMPEC will prepare a resource mobilisation strategy in consultation with stakeholders involved in on-going or planned projects, potential donors and financial institutions, to potentially finance these activities/projects.

127. SCP/RAC released the Publication on “The business case for tackling plastic packaging. Inspiring practices from the food and beverage value chain”, designed to motivate organisations across the food & beverage value chain to rethink the use of plastic packaging through a circular economy perspective and contribute to the abatement of marine plastic pollution. A dedicated webinar was organised to release the report. The centre also kicked-off ‘CapiMed-Islands’ Project to capitalise BeMed initiatives to reduce plastic pollution in Mediterranean Islands. A Report on potential synergies among BeMed projects and support needs, including a review of resources to fight plastic pollution in islands was prepared and 2 technical sessions to engage and capacitate the members of the #BeMedIslands community were organized.

128. SCP/RAC organized the first edition of the WeMed Mediterranean Sustainability Award. WeMed, the Mediterranean Sustainability Award, as is a Flagship Initiative of the MSSD. The WeMed Award recognises success stories of sustainable businesses and other actors supporting them. It raises awareness about the role of sustainable entrepreneurs as key drivers for the transition towards a green, circular and blue economy in the Mediterranean, as well as the challenges that they face and the important role of different actors to support them (public authorities, business support organisations, educational organisations, financial actors, civil society organisations...). The call for applications, targeting southern Mediterranean countries, was opened in July 2021 for 30 days. The Jury evaluated the proposal of the candidates and selected finalists and awardees. The winners will be announced at the Award Ceremony to be celebrated during the SwitchMed Connect in Autumn 2021. The price will amount to 10.000€ for Category A1 (sustainable Business Model Early stage), 15.000€ for Category A2 (Sustainable business model Growth Stage) and will consist in an honorary Award for category B1 (Public Authorities).

II.3 Core Theme II: BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS

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

129. The Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) was set up during 2020 and its programme of work was outlined. The first and the second meetings of AGEM took place by videoconference on 8 December 2020 and 3-4 May 2021. These meetings reviewed and discussed the first draft of the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean and agreed on draft Criteria for inclusion of Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) in the SPA directory, and on considerations for identifying and reporting OECMs in the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment. The AGEM representatives attended the 15th meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points and reported about the AGEM works and presented the outputs issued during the previous period.

130. The 2020 Forum of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean is jointly co-organized by SPA/RAC, MedPAN, WWF Mediterranean and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, and was expected to take place at the end of 2020 in Monaco. However due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Virtual Forum Sessions have been organized on 2-4 June 2021 to discuss about operational recommendations of the post-2020 MPA roadmap and the Forum face-to-face event is postponed to 29 November-1 December 2021 during which the roadmap will be presented and finalized. This post-2020 roadmap for Mediterranean MPAs, part of the MPA forum collaborative process, is being prepared jointly by SPA/RAC, MedPAN and WWF, in consultation with the other partner organizations.

131. Exchanges took place with CBD marine and coastal and islands programme on envisaging work for the conservation of deep sea Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems through collaboration between RSOs and RFMOs. GFCM was approached by SPA/RAC to discuss common involvement on deep seas spatial conservation issues in areas within EBSAs, and the possibility of future collaboration with the CBD on that. Two working teleconferences, focusing on spatial management, with GFCM, ACCOBAMS, and IUCN took place on 25 June 2020 and on 2 February 2021 to draft a document on common focus of work for spatial management, including feasible deep-sea areas, where work in synergy might take place for their conservation and enhanced management.

132. REMPEC and SPA/RAC developed a draft Guidance Document for the identification and designation of Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas in relation to SPAMIs, supported within the framework of the Cooperation Agreement with IMELS. Consultations were carried out with all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, through REMPEC Circular Letter No. 10/2021 and a letter from SPA/RAC, respectively dated 9 and 11 March 2021. In this context, the draft PSSA Guidance Document was finalised taking into consideration the comments made by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

133. The final draft PSSA Guidance Document was submitted to the 14th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC and the 15th Meeting of the SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points, for their consideration. Both meetings examined and agreed upon the PSSA Guidance Document, as set out in the Appendix to document REMPEC/WG.51/8.

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

134. Based on the most recent developments in the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework elaboration process and other regional and global processes, SPA/RAC started the elaboration of a Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean. First, a strategic framework was presented and discussed during a 2-day online Stakeholder Consultation Workshop (8-9 April 2021), that was attended by 51 participants from national institutions, universities, UN and other intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and individual experts. Based on this first online consultation, a full draft was prepared and reviewed by the AGEM members at their second meeting (videoconference, 3-4 May 2021), then by an online consultation workshop with the SPA/BD Focal Points (videoconference, 18 May 2021). The final draft resulting from the input of these preparatory consultations is submitted to the 15th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points for review and endorsement.

135. The assessment and the updating of the Regional Action Plan concerning dark habitats and cetaceans have been finalized, based on national and regional consultations. The updated Regional Action Plans have been presented to the 15th SPA/BD thematic Focal Points meeting and the MAP Focal Points meeting in view to be submitted to COP 22 consideration (document UNEP/MED IG.25/16). The identification of the first elements for the elaboration of the list of Reference of Pelagic Habitat Types in the Mediterranean Sea prepared in-house and a proposal to establish to multidisciplinary group of experts nominated by the Contracting Parties to define parameters allowing to use phytoplankton and zooplankton for relevant IMAP biodiversity indicators and elaborate the List of Reference of Pelagic Habitat Types in the Mediterranean Sea was submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 22 consideration (document UNEP/MED IG.25/16). The elaboration of the “Interpretation Manual” of the new reference list of marine benthic habitat types in the Mediterranean is underway; the first draft of the manual was presented as information document to the 15th SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points and to the MAP Focal Points.

136. SPA/RAC contributed to the updating of the draft ballast water management strategy for the Mediterranean Sea for 2022-2027. The updated strategy is presented to the 15th SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points Meeting before submission to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 22 for adoption.

137. Within the MAVA Species Project, SPA/RAC (as the Project’s Coordinator) and the Partners (ACCOBAMS, BirdLife Int., IUCN-Med, MEDASSET) are working on enhancing the knowledge on marine megafauna species (Marine Mammals, Sea Birds, Sea turtles and Elasmobranchs) in key areas of the Mediterranean. The Species Project is expected to continue until October 2022 and will provide a complementary data for the MAVA MedBycatch Project based on the results of the 9 supported small projects. SPA/RAC is coordinating (2018-2022) the implementation of Tunisian activities of the MAVA funded project “Mitigating dolphin depredation in Mediterranean fisheries – Joining efforts for strengthening cetacean conservation and sustainable fisheries”. The project proposal developed in close collaboration with several Contracting Parties and the relevant partners has been approved by the MONK SEAL ALLIANCE the main objective is to implement the regional strategy for the Monk seal conservation in the Mediterranean.

138. Within the MAVA MedBycatch project-phase 2 SPA/RAC is providing support for the harmonization and interconnection between the POST 2020 SAPBIO and the new GFCM Mediterranean and Black Sea Fishery and aquaculture strategy to ensure that both are tackling the mitigation of the incidental catches of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean. Additionally, SPA/RAC is ensuring the dissemination and use of the standardized protocol “Monitoring incidental catch of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea - Methodology for data collection” elaborated by FAO/GFCM in close collaboration with SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, IUCN Med, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia and MEDASSET. Within this framework, SPA/RAC started in November 2020 a new observer bycatch data collection programme in Tunisia and is coordinating with FAO/GFCM ACCOBAMS, IUCN Med, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, MEDASSET and WWF for the harmonization of the bycatch data collection programmes and bycatch data analysis as well as bycatch mitigation measures trials in Croatia, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. In addition, SPA/RAC, in coordination with regional and national MedBycatch partners, started bycatch mitigation trials in Tunisia in August 2021. Mitigation trials also started in the other four beneficiary countries coordinated by the MedBycatch partners.

139. For the needs of French-speaking training on impulsive noise at sea, organized in the framework of the QUIETMED project, SPA/RAC has prepared the “manual for monitoring anthropogenic activities generating impulsive noise at sea”. This manual is intended for the competent authorities of the Contracting Parties. It provides basic notions on the issue of underwater noise, its impact, legal frameworks and reporting methods at national and international levels (example: the register set up by ACCOBAMS).

140. REMPEC delivered on 23 September, a Webinar on the implementation of the BWM Convention in the Mediterranean region financed by the IMO Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme. REMPEC initiated the preparation of the National Ballast Water Management Strategy for Morocco to be completed by 14 December 2021.

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

141. . With the assistance of SPA/RAC, Montenegro is preparing its NAP for the conservation of coralligenous and Malta its national Action concerning species introduction and invasive species. The NAP for the conservation of the coralligenous species in Lebanon is prepared and nationally adopted with the SPA/RAC assistance. A study of the vermetid reefs in Lebanon will be conducted before the end of the year 2021.

142. Within the EU-funded IMAP-MPA project, SPA/RAC has already initiated the process to support the elaboration of the national strategy in Egypt. It has also undertaken three (3) complementary ecological and three (3) socio-economic assessments, respectively at Rachgoun Island future MPA in Algeria, Tyre Coast Nature Reserve in Lebanon and Gulf of Sirte future MPA in Libya. Those comprehensive studies paved the way for the launching of the of the management plans elaboration at the three existing/future MPAs and the provision of support for their effective implementation.

143. Within the framework of the “Co-managed No-Take Zones/MPAs project” (July 2020-October 2022), SPA/RAC is supporting the relevant national authorities of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey, through a participatory approach, in updating, developing and implementing management plans for Al Hoceima National Park (Morocco), Kuriat Islands future Marine and Coastal Protected Area (MCPA) (Tunisia), Foça Special Environment Protection Area (Turkey) and Rachgoun Island future MPA (Algeria), to reduce the impact of fishing activities on species and habitats, based on the results of the MAVA-funded MedKeyHabitats I and II projects. Supporting national and local authorities in implementing MPA management plans is involving activities ranging from surveillance, monitoring, engaging local stakeholders, and establishing sustainable financing mechanisms to information, communication, awareness-raising, capacity-building, networking and exchange of experience, through twinning programmes, scientific events and stakeholder workshops.

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

144. Progress is made in the implementation of the second IMAP phase within the EU funded IMAP-MPA and EcAp-MED III projects. National meetings were conducted online with the national stakeholders to discuss and agree on the establishment of the national IMAP steering committee and try to identify national needs in terms of technical and scientific support to deliver quality assured data to the 2023 MED QSR. Cross cutting issues, integration modalities between the IMAP clusters at national level are ongoing.

145. The CORMON Biodiversity and Fisheries was successfully organized by videoconference on 10-11 June 2021 to discuss key steps toward the 2023 MED QSR, including the monitoring guidelines/protocols for benthic habitats, the refinement of monitoring scales and suggestions of assessment scales, reference and thresholds values for the IMAP Common Indicator (CI) 3 (Species distributional range), CI 4 (Population abundance of selected species abundance) and CI 5 (Population demographic characteristics) for marine mammal species, marine turtles and CI6 (non-indigenous species). The meeting was also an opportunity to discuss draft data standards and data dictionaries on CIs 3,4 and 5 on marine mammals, marine turtles and sea birds. Technical documents on assessment scales and methodologies for monitoring and assessment of Common Indicators related to the biodiversity cluster (for 2023 MED QSR preparation) were endorsed by the meetings of the SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points and the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group.

146. Following the recommendations of the Integrated CORMON meetings (December 2020), the informal thematic Online Working Groups (OWGs) were held to provide important scientific feedback and technical support to the IMAP implementation at regional/sub-regional level, in particular on the aspects related to development of methodologies, assessment, scales, integration, protocols and guidelines in line with the approved 2020-2021 Programme of Work. These OWGs were operational for the following Ecological Objectives (EOs)/Common Indicators (CI): EO1 CI 3,4 and 5 related to marine turtles, marine mammals and sea birds (March and April 2021) and EO2 CI6 related to Non-Indigenous Species (April 2021). The OWG on Habitats (CIs1,2) is operational to discuss assessment

elements and thresholds and baseline values.

147. The elaboration of baseline for NIS at national, sub-regional and regional levels is ongoing considering the results of similar work made in the framework of the EU MSFD. The National NIS inventories were already received from the Contracting Parties and are being reviewed and validated in close collaboration with the national experts designated by the Contracting Parties. Progress was discussed during the CORMON meeting (10-11 June 2021), where participants emphasized the importance to continue the collaboration with the EU Joint Research Centre (JRC) and requested further strengthening the existing collaboration with the operational OWG.

148. With the aim to fulfill the Common Indicator 3 related to Species distributional range of Cetacean, SPA/RAC has joined the InterMed project, coordinated by Fondazione Acquario di Genova Onlus. The project aimed at the study of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean basin. Among the project activities, a field research campaign located in the Strait of Sicily, to increase knowledge about the presence of Cetaceans in this strategic area of the Mediterranean Sea will be implemented. SPA/RAC is managing the field work along the Northern Tunisian coast in close collaboration with the APAL (Coastal Protection and Planning Agency).

149. Within the framework of the implementation of the MAVA marine turtles project, national monitoring programmes for marine turtles nesting and stranding is ongoing in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon and Tunisia.

150. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to engage in SPAMI reviews as per the regular modus operandi, involving independent experts international travelling to the concerned countries, site visits and in-person meetings. Therefore, the SPAMI ordinary periodic reviews were made remotely, using the updated format for the periodic review of SPAMIs adopted by COP 21. The online final evaluation meetings took place between mid-April and mid-May 2021. The outcomes of the reviews of the following 11 SPAMIs were brought to the attention of the 15th SPA/BD Focal Points meeting: Lara-Toxeftra Turtle Reserve (Cyprus); Bouches de Bonifacio Nature Reserve (France); Capo Caccia-Isola Piana Marine Protected Area (Italy); Miramare Marine Protected Area (Italy); Plemmirio Marine Protected Area (Italy); Punta Campanella Marine Protected Area (Italy); Tavolara-Punta Coda Cavallo Marine Protected Area (Italy); Torre Guaceto Marine Protected Area and Natural Reserve (Italy); Al-Hoceima National Park (Morocco); Archipelago of Cabrera National Park (Spain); and, Maro-Cerro Gordo Cliffs (Spain).

151. Field surveys to determine the distribution of the main marine habitats, including the most sensitive ones, is ongoing in Tunisia within the MAVA funded MedKeyHabitats II project. Distribution and sensitivity maps of the main marine habitats in Malta, Morocco, Algeria and Turkey are available at the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform. Within the MAVA species project, the small projects to Fill Key Knowledge Gaps for Vulnerable Species (marine mammals, seabirds, sea turtles and elasmobranchs) Impacted by Fisheries in Selected Areas of the Mediterranean are ongoing and will ended by November 2021.

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

152. A regional training session on the identification of marine key habitats (Common Indicators CI-1, EO1 and CI-2, EO1 of IMA) Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform (MBP) is planned to be organized online by SPA/RAC for the end of November 2021, when the manual of interpretation of marine habitats, the SDF web application and the new Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform will be ready. It will be organized in synergy with the EU-funded IMA-MPA and EcAp-MED III projects.

153. The 5th Conference on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the South Mediterranean Countries (CSMC5), hosted by the National Centre for Marine Sciences of Lebanon (CNRS-L), was held online from 13 to 15 April 2021. This Conference was organised by ACCOBAMS in close collaboration with SPA/RAC and financially supported by Monaco.

154. SPA/RAC is leading Work-package 10 of the EU-funded project ODYSSEA

(odysseaplatform.eu), which aims to develop the capacity of North African partners (Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt) to carry out observing campaigns at sea, analyze collected data, develop numerical models and manage observatories. SPA/RAC intervenes in 2 components: i) the organization of capacity building events and ii) the support to young North African scientists to participate in summer schools organized within the framework of the project. Data and services provide support for sensor or modelling systems collecting/producing diverse data parameters for Biodiversity and Ecosystems (EO1), Non-indigenous species (EO2), Harvest of commercially exploited Fish and Shellfish (EO3), Eutrophication (EO5), Hydrography (EO7), Pollution (EO9), and Marine litter (EO10).

155. SPA/RAC enabled young applicant scientists from the southern Mediterranean countries to annually participate to all ODYSSEA summer schools on oceanography since starting in 2018, including the 2nd school on Oceanography and Fisheries in the Mediterranean, from September 2 to 6, 2019, held on the Greek island of Alonissos, enabling to i) use the ODYSSEA project platform for retrieving, managing and processing oceanographic, environmental and fisheries data of the Mediterranean, ii) learn about the modern developments on marine instruments and sensors used in field sampling for operational oceanographic monitoring, iii) understand ecological models and their role in marine ecosystem management. The 3rd ODYSSEA summer school (held on 23-27 November 2020) on “Satellite Observations & Data Processing in Operational Oceanography”, focused on “the synergy between satellite observations of the sea surface and in situ measurements”.

156. ODYSSEA training workshops with SPA/RAC contribution were held for Observatory Managers on marine monitoring equipment: Glider (Alseamar) and sensor systems (Develogic) (May 2019, Rousset, France, July 2019, Hamburg, Germany). In October 2020, SPA/RAC co-organized the workshop dedicated to Tunisian stakeholders in collaboration with the Tunisian Association for Sustainable Development and Conservation of Wildlife (ANDDCVS), during which the tools of the "MARINOMICA" oceanographic information platform, developed within the framework of the ODYSSEA PROJECT, were presented, along with other results based on satellite observations and modeling. On 22-24 February 2021, SPA/RAC provided Technical and logistical support to RAED (Egyptian Partner) for the organization of a training workshop on “Geospatial analytics and Remote Sensing for Climate Change Impact on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems” held partially face-to-face and partially online. Furthermore, SPA/RAC coordinated the preparation and provided Technical and logistical support to AGIR (Moroccan partner) for of the workshop dedicated to Moroccan end-users “Platform user validation & Operational Oceanography Workshop”, held on 2-3 June 2021.

157. Within the framework of the MedBycatch project-phase II, MPA/NTZ project and Sea Turtle Project funded by MAVA, SPA/RAC signed a contract with AVFA (the Tunisian Agriculture Extension and Training Agency) to implement a series of trainings in Tunisia for fishers, bycatch observers, fishery guards and MPA Managers related to vulnerable species and habitat conservation, bycatch and release alive and onboard security.

158. SCP/RAC selected three pilot projects for the implementation of SCP solutions to prevent Marine Litter in MPAs. The three pilot projects are being implemented in Cabo de Gata (Spain), Delta del Ebre (Spain), Miramare (Italy). The focus is on the implementation of systems for reusable glasses, collection of beverage packaging and mussels’ nets. Pilot actions kicked-off at the beginning of the summer season and will be finalized at the end of October 2021. A transferring regional event will be organized during the 2nd half of November 2021 in Delta del Ebre Natural Park. The event will aim at transferring the learnings of the pilot actions to Mediterranean MPAs and Mediterranean policy makers (under Plastic Busters MPAs project and in synergy with CapiMedIslands).

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

159. The MoU between SPA/RAC and the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the period 2021-2022 has been signed by the two organisations after its review by the MAP Coordination Unit. In addition, another agreement including the detailed joined work programme and the related budget has been established. The main joint activities are focusing on the implementation of the national cetacean monitoring programmes in Southern Mediterranean countries through the EU funded EcAp III and the Quiet Sea projects; the evaluation and the update of the action plan for the conservation of cetacean in

the Mediterranean; and, a capacity building programme.

160. A new Framework Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) was signed in October 2020 between SPA/RAC and MedPAN for the period 2020-2025. This MoC is a follow-up to previous ones signed between the organizations since 2010. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed in April 2021 with the University of Sciences of Sfax (Tunisia) within the framework of the implementation of the projects; the Life EuroTurtles Project, the (MAVA) marine turtles project and the (EU-funded) Marine Litter MED project.

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

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

161. To support the socio-economic evaluation of measures in Regional Strategies and Action Plans, Plan Bleu/RAC continued its participation to the MEDREGION project, which ended in July 2021. Final deliverables are currently under clearance and will be available in the coming months. A successor project ABIOMMED was awarded to the consortium led by HCMR (Greece), with limited changes in consortium partners, and Plan Bleu/RAC will thus continue this activity for two more years.

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

162. A toolbox for the analytical phase of MSP has been drafted and a proposal has been made on how to make it as attractive and interactive as possible. The aim is to offer a toolbox that is in line with ICZM, demonstrating the application of scientific and other tools for the preparation of MSP based on the ecosystem management principles and providing a rich source of information and advice – a practical “go-to” sources for Mediterranean practitioners. The toolbox will be finalized in the months to come and will be promoted and used for the first time during the MSP training session to be organized online, in December 2021, by PAP/RAC.

163. The GEF Adriatic Project, implemented in Albania and Montenegro with the support of PAP/RAC and SPA/RAC, was finalized in June 2021 although the activities have been somewhat slowed down due to the impossibility of meeting with partners in person and implementing on-the-ground testing because of the COVID-19 pandemic. To compensate, activities have been organised through numerous online consultations with national experts and institutions, as well as with different stakeholder groups. This has significantly impacted the dynamics of outputs delivery; nevertheless, this innovative project in terms of integration and linking IMAP indicators and MSP, has produced some extremely valuable outputs in Montenegro (where PAP/RAC is mostly involved), such as: a Diagnostic Analysis (DA) for the MSP of the marine waters under the jurisdiction of Montenegro, designed around two key elements: marine vulnerability assessment; an activity suitability assessment; a series of studies related to collecting, mapping and assessing environmental, ecological and human activities (with focus on maritime traffic, system of port infrastructure, maritime tourism and aquaculture). This resulted in the identification of marine vulnerable areas, where human activities need to be avoided or carefully planned, as well as areas suitable for development, all leading to the proposal of a marine spatial plan. The final presentation conference of the project was organized by PAP/RAC on 28 June 2021, hosted by the Montenegrin Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism, with the participation of stakeholders from both project countries: Albania and Montenegro.

Strategic Outcome 4.3: Strengthening national implementation

164. The Inception Meeting and the First Meeting of the CAMP Bosnia and Herzegovina Steering Committee (SC) was organized online on 15 October 2020. The SC has seven members, representatives of different administrative levels and institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and PAP/RAC. This first meeting was honoured by the participation of the Prime Minister of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. All the horizontal and individual activities of the project have been

progressing well, except for the MEDPOL-led activity on pollution indicators because the national counterpart institution(s) for IMAP implementation have not yet been designated. This issue is being discussed and it is expected that a solution will be found soon. Particularly advanced are the REMPEC-led activity on the National Contingency Plan, which has been drafted and is close to be finalized, as well as the PAP/RAC-led activities on sustainable tourism and adaptation to climate change. On 23 September 2021 PAP/RAC organized a face-to-face training session on these two themes for national and local stakeholders included in the CAMP, followed by the Second Meeting of the CAMP SC on 24 September 2021 and a local Coast Day celebration. Finally, INFO/RAC has prepared and launched a CAMP web site, which is being populated

165. The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down the preparation of the agreement for a transboundary CAMP between Cyprus and Israel. In September 2020, it was agreed that both countries would provide within a month-time the information about the budget they intended to mobilize for the project. Israel provided the information by March 2021, while no feedback was received from Cyprus. In that situation, following Israeli request suggesting starting the project as soon as possible, leaving the door opened to Cyprus to join at a later stage, and in agreement with the Secretariat PAP/RAC has finalized the CAMP Agreement with Israel, which is still to be validated and signed by the national authorities. In June 2021 Cyprus contacted the Secretariat, asking to continue consultations as soon as possible. PAP/RAC immediately drafted and shared with the Cypriot authorities an agreement related to the part of the project to be implemented in Cyprus but no feedback has been received by end September 2021.

166. Significant progress was made regarding the transboundary CAMP between Albania and Italy for the Otranto Channel area. The CAMP Agreement was drafted in December 2020 with the support of two national consultants and shared with the relevant national authorities of both countries. The Agreement was signed in March 2021, allowing to start the implementation of the activities, the first one being the recruitment of the National CAMP Coordinators for Albania and Italy and setting-up of the CAMP Steering Committee. The activities have been progressing well although the Covid-19 pandemic does not allow for face-to-face meetings and other events.

Strategic Outcome 4.4: Monitoring and assessment

167. In the framework of the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work 2020-2021, Plan Bleu/RAC was commissioned to elaborate a Roadmap for the sustainable development of the aquaculture sector in the Mediterranean (the Roadmap) in partnership with two Interreg Med communities of projects: the Blue Growth community and the Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection community. The Roadmap is expected to be the output of a Pan-Mediterranean debate with a large number of organizations, projects, economic operators and decision makers. A drafting Working Group (~80 members) has been already established. Two webinars were organized in November 2020 in collaboration with FAO/GFCM, West Med and IUCN Med among others in order to: i) agree upon the main governance/environmental/economic/social challenges posed by the aquaculture sector in the Mediterranean; ii) identify for each challenge innovative approaches/tools/ technologies/practices as promising solutions. The Roadmap will include indicators for proper monitoring and evaluation as well as criteria to facilitate the transfer and replication of the most promising innovations. The roadmap is expected to be finalized end of 2021. Ways to further promote the road map, including for their consideration by the Contracting Parties, are under consideration taking into account also the expected mandate to develop a Regional Plan under Article 15 of the LBS Protocol of the Barcelona Convention.

168. Plan Bleu/RAC released in September 2020 a report entitled Cahier #19 Blue Economy, Case studies, lessons and perspectives. The overall objective of the Report is to assess and highlight the current weight and various opportunities provided by the blue economy in the Mediterranean in support of sustainable development and to showcase a range of concrete examples and good practices of how blue economy works in the region.

169. With the support of the French Development Agency, Plan Bleu/RAC will produce in 2021 a short document to summarize the current situation, the environmental impacts and future trends of desalination activities. A working group of various stakeholders will be set up and several

consultations carried out. In the long run, this work should contribute to the emergence of clear regulatory frameworks on investments, and criteria to assess the impacts and sustainability, for desalination projects and strategies.

170. The Land-Sea Interactions (LSI) methodology developed within the SUPREME and SIMWESTMED projects is being tested in Malta, with the support of PAP/RAC. Malta has collected the available data and is in process of analysing the interactions. Several consultation meetings were organised with all relevant national stakeholders as well as with the PAP/RAC team following this activity.

171. Within the GEF Adriatic project, the integrated monitoring programme for Montenegro and Albania have been finalized and submitted to national authorities for validation. Within the same project, a series of online meetings and consultations on MSP with national experts and institutions of Montenegro were organized and a number of documents prepared, as well as the IMAP-based data base for Montenegro, based on a field study of marine habitats, carried out by the Institute of Marine Biology (IMB) of Montenegro. Under the coordination of PAP/RAC and with the support of the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism, which highlighted the need to protect the habitats of the gold coral communities (*Geradia savaglia*) significantly affected by human activities, the IMB and the Public Enterprise for Coastal Zone Management of Montenegro installed protecting buoys on two of the research sites and cleaned two underwater fields. Information boards were also set up on the coral fields and the ban on fishing and anchoring vessels in the fenced locations. As a part of the MSP process, these locations will be proposed to be declared marine protected areas.

172. PAP/RAC supported the organization of the 1st International Conference on Water, Environment Protection and Sustainable Development in Albania. Due to COVID-19 pandemic the conference was postponed from October 2020 to 17-18 May 2021 and was held partly face-to-face (in Tirana for the Albanian participants) and partly online (for foreign participants).

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

173. Several training sessions were organised for the Albanian and Montenegrin experts within the GEF Adriatic Project. A virtual training on GES assessment regarding marine litter in Montenegro was held on 5 March 2021. The first ever attempt to assess GES for marine litter in Montenegro was introduced by an expert from the Institute of Marine Biology of Kotor and shared with the interested country representatives who were provided with detailed information on important policies on marine litter in Montenegro; pressures and impacts related to marine litter; methodology of GES assessment for all marine litter indicators; scales of assessment; the current state regarding marine litter in Montenegro (in comparison to threshold values); and proposed management measures for tackling marine litter and needs for further development. A training session on the same subject was organised online for the Albanian experts on 19 March 2021, while the training on Info System was held online on 8 April 2021, in collaboration with INFO/RAC.

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

Strategic Outcome 5.3: Strengthening national implementation.

174. Regarding the preparation of National ICZM Strategies in Egypt and Lebanon, and the analysis of the national legal frameworks in Algeria and Tunisia, in support of the ratification of the ICZM Protocol, the ToRs have been prepared and consultations with the FPs in both countries have started. PAP/RAC had several online meetings with the representatives of the Lebanese Ministry of Environment to prepare the process of the Strategy preparation, while no feedback has been received from Egypt at this stage.

175. UNESCO-IHP, in the context of the collaboration with UNEP/MAP on the GEF-UNEP MedProgramme Child Project that addresses the management of coastal aquifers (Child Project 2.1 – GEF ID 9687), carried out consultations with six of the nine participating countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco and Tunisia) between May and July 2021 to reconfirm national priorities and identify relevant stakeholder groups, in view of the development of national work plans for the development of the aquifer management plans (in five priority aquifers)

and preparations for the national assessments on submarine groundwater discharges, amongst other activities.

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

176. A special session of the MedOpen Advanced educational programme was delivered during September-December 2020 for the Masters' degree students of two universities: Faculty of Science and Technique Al Hoceima (FSTH), Morocco, and Faculty of Science, Bizerte (FSB), Tunisia, as a part of their academic curricula. Preparatory activities for the next run of the MedOpen Advanced have started in order to be able to deliver it in the second half of 2021 for the students of a Moroccan faculty, which has started on 20 September 2021 for a duration of four months. Moreover, as a part of the GEF Adriatic project, material has been assembled for a module on MSP to be included in MedOpen.

177. An agreement was reached with the Syrian Virtual University (SVU) to support their master's degree on integrated management of natural resources. PAP/RAC will be delivering up to 7 lectures on ICZM and MSP for some 30-40 students. Teaching is supposed to start in September 2021.

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

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

178. In collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation and in partnership with the Regional Environment Centre in Turkey four flagship and six pilot projects were developed for sustainable consumption and production within the Electrical and Electronic Equipment value chains that was selected as the focus of the background study. Turkey requested similar support to develop a study focusing on another key sector: the construction and demolition value chain. Following discussion between SCP/RAC and the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation, a roadmap was agreed and Terms of Reference for the selection of a national experts were prepared and disseminated.

179. Tunisian Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment requested support for the development of an awareness raising campaign to promote sustainable consumption practices to support the implementation of the Single Use Plastic Bags Ban. Therefore, SCP/RAC continued the technical support to the Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment in addressing single-use plastic bags. Once the decree banning conventional plastic bags was adopted, which benefited from the Marine Litter Med work, it was convened a tailored support to conceive a communication campaign to inform on the content of the decree to consumers and retail sector. For that, a communication agency was engaged and different proposals were prepared with the support of a local expert for consideration by the MoE.

180. Following the relevant Decision adopted at COP 21, SCP/RAC prepared a baseline study for the development of regional measures for green and circular businesses. A methodology for the preparation of the study was developed and a team of experts was recruited. As a result, SCP/RAC prepared 22 country profiles, 4 sub-regional baseline assessment, 1 summary of Policy Recommendations to Support the development of Green and Circular Businesses in the Mediterranean and 10 international best practices factsheets on Policy Instruments that promote enabling environments for green and circular businesses were prepared. A stakeholders' consultation process was organised and a first proposal of regional measures was discussed on the 23-24 of February 2021 with designated national experts. The consolidated proposal of the set of regional measures was reviewed during the SCP/RAC Focal Points Meeting (Teleconference, 1-3 June 2021) and was then submitted to the MAP Focal Points Meeting that welcomed the proposal of the draft Decision on the Regional Measures and recommended its submission to COP22 (document UNEP/MED IG.25/21).

Strategic Outcome 6.2: Monitoring and assessment

181. SCP/RAC reviewed the SCP indicators' list in light of the latest development at the international level (in particular SDGs) and in coordination with the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard managed by Plan Bleu/RAC. The updated list was used for the indicator-based mid-term evaluation of

the SCP Regional Action Plan. Factsheets for each indicator were prepared following PB/RAC's template for the MSSD indicators and were uploaded within the Website of the Mediterranean Observatory for Environment and Sustainable Development.

182. A MEAL System has been drafted, underpinning the Theory of Change of SCP/RAC's sustainable business support programme. By the end of 2021, the MEAL and the Impact Monitoring tool will be fully operational and embedded to the SCP/RAC and partners' business service offer.

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

183. TheSwitchers.org, the online platform for sustainable business development, has been launched. The platform offers a single-entry point to The Switchers Toolbox, gathering a unique set of methodologies and tools for sustainable business development designed and digitalized by SCP/RAC; the SwitchersFund, promoting matchmaking between green entrepreneurs and financial actors; the Switchers Community, the community of Mediterranean sustainable businesses; and the Policy Hub, which will soon provide information on enabling policies for sustainable businesses in the Mediterranean. The Switchers Toolbox provides a set of innovative tools for sustainable business development to green entrepreneurs: Green Business Model development tool; Green Business Plan development tool; Eco-design tool; Access to Market; Access to Finance; Impact Measurement tool. The Switchers Toolbox also allows interaction among various target users: entrepreneurs, trainers/mentors, business support organizations and financial actors. So far, more than 3,300 entrepreneurs have registered to The Switchers Toolbox.

184. Switchers National Partnerships, gathering Business Support Organizations (BSOs) targeting Green Entrepreneurs, are being set up in 7 Mediterranean states. The goals of the National Partnerships are to reinforce the ecosystems providing sustainable business development services, improving capacities and promoting coordination and networking among the BSOs. Almost one hundred BSOs have joined the National Partnerships so far (19 in Morocco, 10 in Algeria, 20 in Tunisia, 11 in Jordan, 8 in Palestine, 13 in Israel and 14 in Lebanon). The Partnerships gather a great variety of BSOs, such as public institutions, private companies and non-profit organizations.

185. A Training of Trainers Programme (ToT) is being implemented to transfer sustainable business development capacities, methodologies and tools to Mediterranean BSOs (the members of the National Partnerships and other organizations). The contents of the ToT are linked with the online tools available in The Switchers Toolbox and offer four main modules: Green Business Model development (4 days); Green Business Plan development and Impact Assessment (3 Days); Eco-design (2 Days); and Access to Market and Access to Finance (2 Days). So far, a total of 292 trainers selected by 97 BSOs have been trained in 10 countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Italy and Spain). 47% of the trainees are women. SCP/RAC organized a total of 87 days Online-Workshops. 93% of the trainers rate the ToT as good or very good and 99% intend to include the methodology and the online tools into the support programmes provided by their BSOs.

186. Once the BSOs and their experts have been trained, the Support Programme targeting Green Entrepreneurs at ideation stage and early-stage has been launched. Calls for applicants are open in several countries to support entrepreneurs in developing their sustainable business models and plans. So far, 532 Green Entrepreneurs have been supported in 7 countries (Egypt, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Palestine, Spain and Tunisia).

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

187. To overcome barriers posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, digital tools have been further explored, leading to the development of: (a) An investment opportunity tracking system, to scout and disseminate potential opportunities to green entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean; (b) The development of an Access-to-Finance Toolkit, hosted on the Sustainable Business Development Online Platform, targeting green entrepreneurs at different stages of their business life cycle; (c) The development of a dedicated dashboard for Financial Institutions (FIs) on the "TheSwitcher.org" Platform, including the

creation of a digital training, supporting FIs to better identify and analyze financial green opportunities; (d) A virtual match-making mechanism, allowing FIs to interact with Green Entrepreneurs. During the current reporting period, SCP/RAC procured external services to facilitate the establishment of a Sustainable Finance National Task Force in Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. The teams are working to update the current database of potential local investors and to engage them to the Green Impact Investment Network. National Task Forces will closely work with BSOs to better identify green entrepreneurs' financial needs and scout investment opportunities.

188. A legal and governance assessment has been undertaken to evaluate the opportunities to establish a public-private funding mechanism managed by SCP/RAC in partnership with financial institutions and other regional organizations. An initial report has been released in September 2021, highlighting modalities and pathways for implementation.

189. The Business-to-business (B2B) web-platform "The Switchers Products" has been developed and delivered in September 2021. The Switchers Products will offer green entrepreneurs a methodology and tools to showcase and present their products and services and will be coupled with a specific marketing strategy to facilitate B2B and retailing opportunities. The platform will be officially released in January 2022, once the user base will be completed and will be coupled with marketing and networking activities. The Switchers Products will be integrated to the Switchers.org platform and offered as a digital service to all green entrepreneurs.

190. An Open Eco-Innovation methodology has been developed with the objective of facilitating market links, triggering co-creation processes and adding social and economic value to start-ups' and entrepreneurs' innovations. The methodology is accompanied by a new digital platform allowing interaction among innovation enablers, industry stakeholders and entrepreneurs to respond to SCP challenges in the Region. Both the methodology and the platform will be launched in October 2021.

191. An assessment to position and grow "The Switchers Community" has been finalized. The assessment results highlighted the need to modernize and increase the sense of ownership of the Community, better devising its value proposition and communication channels, recommending key actions to be undertaken in the short and medium term. As a first step, a 2-days event "The Switchers Talks" was planned to offer members the opportunity to reflect on the role and objectives of the Community and to access to updated information on access to finance, digital marketing and business support tools. The event was held on 28 and 29 June 2021 and led to the launch of a Community manifesto and roadmap.

II.7 Cross-cutting Theme III: CLIMATE CHANGE

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

192. To promote the integration of Nature Based Solutions in Climate Change Adaptation Strategies, Plan Bleu/RAC organized a Multipartner workshop during the IUCN World Conservation Congress in September 2021.

193. Two guiding documents have been prepared within the EU-funded ADRIADAPT project: "Guidelines for Mainstreaming Adaptation into Coastal Management" and "Coastal Resilience Handbook" - both for the Adriatic coastal zones. The documents have been prepared in English, Croatian and Italian.

Strategic Outcome 7.3: Strengthen national implementation

194. Within the ADRIADAPT project, a catalogue of adaptation options has been developed: around 50 adaptation options have been identified and uploaded on the ADRIADAPT platform, as well as 6 examples of good practice. All materials are available in English, Croatian and Italian. These adaptation options and good practices, although intended for the Adriatic Region, can easily be adapted to wider Mediterranean conditions.

195. Within the same project, in the case study in Croatia, a methodology of assessing the vulnerability of the narrow coastal zone to sea-level rise with specific reference to marine environment has been developed and tested. The results will serve to update the Action Plan for the implementation

of the Sibenik-Knin County Coastal Plan prepared within the GEF MedPartnership.

196. Plan Bleu/RAC has launched its activities to support the preparation of Coastal Plans in Boka Kotorska Bay and the Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region in Morocco, in collaboration with PAP/RAC and in the framework of the GEF MedProgramme Child Project 2.1. and the SCCF Project. These activities currently involve forthcoming Climagine workshops with a focus on coastal adaptation solutions to support the elaboration of the Coastal Plans (in Q42021, Child Project 2.1.), coupled with the elaboration of gender-sensitive climate risk assessments in both areas (SCCF Project).

197. Initial SPA/RAC exchanges took place with MedECC, through PB/RAC, to prepare in 2021 guidelines to enhance the marine biodiversity component of countries in their future updated NDCs, aiming to increase alignment and integration of marine biodiversity concerns and SDG14 pursuit. They will aim to harmonize and coordinate with related tools and initiatives by the UNFCCC and the CBD to maximize synergies. Guidelines will consider the needs identified through the Post- 2020 SAPBIO document endorsed by the 15th meeting of SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points.

198. GWP-Med, in the context of the collaboration with UNEP/MAP on the GEF-UNEP MedProgramme Child Project dedicated to the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus (Child Project 2.2 – GEF ID 9685), has completed its stakeholder analysis and consultation workshop for the project activities in Albania and is advancing on the development of the nexus assessment and nexus strategy for that country. GWP-Med will initiate similar activities in the other two participating countries – Lebanon and Morocco – in 2022.

Strategic Outcome 7.4: Monitoring and assessment

199. The report on socio-economic indicators associated with climate change vulnerabilities in MPAs, prepared by Plan Bleu/RAC in collaboration with SPA/RAC, has been published in October 2020.

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

200. UNEP/MAP and the Union for the Mediterranean, together with other partners, are supporting MedECC's First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) and Summary for Policymakers, an important regional initiative which contributes to well established sound processes on environmental assessment in the Mediterranean. Since its establishment, the scientific secretariat of MedECC has been hosted on a temporary basis by Plan Bleu/RAC in Marseille, France. Plan Bleu/RAC statutes have been updated to allow for long-term hosting. This laid the ground for a renewed agreement between Plan Bleu/RAC and UfM and a SIDA-funded technical support project put in place by UfM in May 2021.

201. MedECC contributes to the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), with a chapter dedicated for the first time to the Mediterranean. This chapter is prepared under the co-leadership of Prof. Wolfgang Cramer, one of the two MedECC coordinators.

202. Following the online consultation (April-June 2020) of policymakers and stakeholders on the draft Summary for Policy-Makers (SPM) of MAR1, and as per Annex IV of Decision IG.24/4, Members of the MCS D Steering Committee, Plan Bleu/RAC Focal Points, Members of the UfM Climate Change Expert Group (CCEG) and of the UfM Environment Task Force, the MedECC Secretariat, Steering Committee and Coordinating Lead Authors, as well as UNEP/MAP, PB/RAC and UfM Secretariat representatives participated remotely, on 22 September 2020, in the MedECC Plenary consultation. The aim of this consultation was to ascertain that MAR1 findings, as presented in the revised draft SPM, are fully comprehensible and unambiguous, and that the comments from the previous online consultation were well addressed. This event was an important step in reinforcing the science-policy dialogue. Approximately 100 participants contributed to a meaningful discussion that resulted in a set of conclusions and recommendations and a final version of the SPM. In particular the Plenary consultation "did not identify any factual inaccuracy or error in the SPM".

203. To continue its mission aiming to consolidate and provide scientific knowledge on climate and environmental change in the Mediterranean, the MedECC secretariat and steering committee work on

three complementary actions: Communication on MAR1 and its SPM; Identification of knowledge gaps, reinforcing the network and capacity-building in the South and the East of the Mediterranean; and preparation of thematic reports related to the challenges identified in MAR1.

III. Financial, Personnel and Administrative Matters

204. According to the audited and certified Statement of Financial Position, the Mediterranean Trust Fund (MTF) balance amounted to USD 8.8 million as at 31 December 2019. The balance reflects the accumulated surplus for MTF and the amount put aside for the Working Capital Reserve (WCR). It represents the total net assets as at the end of the financial year and as such it includes the assessed contributions receivable (arrears) and advance transfers to implementing partners.

205. According to the audited and certified Statement of Financial Position, the host country contribution (CAL) fund balance amounted to USD 656,425 as at 31 December 2019. This balance reflects the accumulated surplus for CAL. It represents the total net assets as at the end of the financial year. The balance of the host country contribution will be utilized for the refurbishment of the current premises of the Secretariat.

206. According to the interim certified Financial Statement for the period ended 31 December 2019, the available balance of the EC Discretionary Contributions (QML account) amounts to USD 1,093,288.

207. Document UNEP/MED IG.25/22 (draft decision on the Programme of Work and Budget for 2022 – 2023) contains detailed information on the status of the MTF.

1. Financial Matters

208. The status of MTF as of 30 September 2021, as reflected in detail in Annex I, is summarized below:

- *Total annual pledges of ordinary contributions for 2020 and 2021: EUR 5,706,788 annually*
- *Total collections for 2020 as of 30 September 2021: EUR 5,652,620 (99.05%)*
- *Total collections for 2021 as of 30 September 2021: EUR 5,141,276 (90.09%)*
- *Total arrears as of 30 September 2021: EUR 1,048,205*

209. The EC Discretionary Contribution for 2020 and 2021, amounting to EUR 596,484 annually, has been received.

210. With regards to consultancy, MAP Components are continuing the efforts to utilize mainly and on a priority basis external funding resources for the consultancies and to use MTF complementary, as need be, in most of the cases and apart from the cases where consultants/individual contractors are recruited to execute functions similar to vacant staff posts. During the 2020-2021 biennium, staff onboarding was on freeze for a prolonged period and majority of in-person activities were converted to those online in order to achieve the intended outputs, and therefore, the remote consultancy modality was used more than previous years. During the second semester of the year 2020, the consultancy costs were funded by the MTF/EC Discretionary Contribution at a rate of 51%. During the first four months of the year 2021, the respective rate reached 43%.

2. Personnel Matters

211. The information regarding the new recruitments is as follows:

- D1 Coordinator (position No: 30600863): Tatjana Hema (national of Albania) was selected for the position and assumed the new function on 1 July 2021, while she was Acting Coordinator for the period 1 June-30 June 2021. Following the retirement of Gaetano Leone (national of Italy) from UNEP effective 31 May 2021. The post was advertised in Inspira a first time from 2 November 2020 to 16 December 2020, re-advertised from 22 January 2021 to 20 February 2021 and further extended through 27 February 2021
- P5 Deputy Coordinator (position No. 30600864): The post is vacant. Recruitment process is in

- progress and the position is to be advertised in Inspira shortly.
- P4 Programme Management Officer (MedProgramme) (position No: 31032928): Olfat Hamdan (national of Lebanon) was selected for the position and reported for duty on 1 July 2021, following Lorenzo Galbiati's (national of Italy) transfer to FAO, Rome, as of 17 August 2020. The post was advertised in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 17 October 2020.
 - P4 Administrative/Fund Management Officer (Position No: 30601050): the incumbent, Ms Kumiko Yatagai (national of Japan), reported for duty effective 1 July 2020 upon completion of her temporary reassignment at UNEP Geneva and that of Ms. Lydia Eibl-Kamolleh (national of Germany) at UNEP/MAP.
 - P3 Programme Management Officer (Shared Environmental Information System II South Project) (Temporary Position No: 31025623): the selected candidate, Ms. Christina Bodouroglou, was temporarily reassigned from UNEP-DTIE to the post for a year during the period 15 February 2019 – 14 February 2020.
 - P3 Programme Management Officer (2023 MED QSR) (position No: 31025245): Joanne Foden (national of the United Kingdom) was selected for the position and reported for duty on 26 July 2021; following Daria Mokhnacheva's (national of France) departure upon completion of the 1-year initial appointment, i.e., 19 August 2020, the recruitment for the post was launched. The post was advertised in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 11 December 2020.
 - P3 Technical Programme Management Officer (MedProgramme) (position No: 31032929): following the cancellation of Job Opening 129926, a new recruitment exercise was initiated, and the post was re-advertised in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 19 May 2021. Recruitment is in progress.
 - P3 Programme Management Officer (EcAp MED III Project) (position No: 30606551): the post was advertised in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 28 July 2021. Recruitment process is in progress.
 - P3 Legal Officer (position No: 31012355): the incumbent, Maria Luisa Rodriguez-Lucas (national of Spain), will be transferred to UNFCCC, Bonn, in August 2021. Recruitment process is in progress and the position is to be advertised in Inspira shortly.
 - P2 Associate Administrative Officer (position No: 31033893): the post was advertised in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 12 April 2020. Stavros Antoniadis (national of Greece) was selected for the position and reported for duty on 15 April 2021.
 - P2 Associate Project Management Officer (IMAP-MPA Project) (position No: 31034029): the post was advertised in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 28 April 2020. Philippe Théou (national of France) was selected for the position and reported for duty on 1 June 2021.
 - P2 Associate Programme Management Officer (Marine Litter MED II project) (position No: 31038349): the post was advertised in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 11 May 2021. Christos Ioakeimidis (national of Greece) was selected for the position and reported for duty on 1 October 2021.
 - P2 Associate Finance and Budget Officer (MedProgramme) (position No: 31039463): the post was advertised in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 24 August 2021. Recruitment is in progress.
 - G5 Finance and Budget Assistant, (MedProgramme) (position No: 31032931): the post was filled by Styliani Tampakaki (national of Greece) through a lateral move effective 1 July 2020.
 - G5 Finance and Budget Assistant, (IMAP-MPA Project) (position No: 30606487): the post was advertised in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 16 October 2019. Anara Eginbaeva (national of Kyrgyzstan) was selected for the position and reported for duty on 4 January 2021.
 - G5 Programme Management Assistant, (MedProgramme) (position No: 31032930): the post was advertised in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 28 February 2020. Shelley Farrington-Gavalas (national of the United Kingdom) was selected for the position and assumed the new functions effective 1 June 2021.

- G5 Administrative Assistant, (Payments and Travel) (position No: 31035037): the post was advertised in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 14 July 2020. Apostolos Apostolopoulos (national of Greece) was selected for the position and took up the new position on 1 July 2021.
- G5 Programme Management Assistant (EcAp MED III Project and Marine Litter MED II) (position No: 31009278): recruitment process will be initiated shortly.

Annex I

Status of Contributions as of 30 September 2021

Status of Assessed Ordinary Contributions apportioned to Parties of the Barcelona Convention as of 30 September 2021

Ordinary Contributions to MTF													
Country	Unpaid Pledges for 2018 and prior years	Unpaid Pledges for 2019	Unpaid Pledges for 2020	Unpaid Pledges as of 31/12/2020			Pledges for 2020	Collections for 2020		Pledges for 2021	Collections for 2021	Unpaid Pledges for 2021	Deferred Income
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR			EUR	EUR		EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Albania				-			3,467	3,467		3,467	3,467		
Algeria	148,829	29,150		177,979			59,801	59,801		59,801	-	59,801	*
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5,228	5,228	5,200	15,656			5,200	-		5,200	-	5,200	
Croatia				-			33,367	33,367		33,367	33,367		
Cyprus				-			15,600	15,600		15,600	15,600		
Egypt				-			80,602	80,602		80,602	-	80,602	
European Union				-			142,670	142,670		142,670	142,670		
France				-			1,918,407	1,918,407		1,918,407	1,918,407		
Greece				-			158,603	158,603		158,603	-	158,603	
Israel				-			212,338	212,338		212,338	-	212,338	
Italy				-			1,433,064	1,433,064		1,433,064	1,433,064		
Lebanon	8,646	18,499	20,367	47,512			20,367	-		20,367	-	20,367	
Libya (State of Libya)	604,662	50,268	13,000	667,930			13,000	-		13,000	-	13,000	*
Malta				-			7,367	7,367		7,367	7,367		
Monaco				-			4,767	4,767		4,767	4,767		
Montenegro				-			1,733	1,733		1,733	1,733		
Morocco				-			23,834	23,834		23,834	23,834		
Slovenia				-			32,934	32,934		32,934	32,934		
Spain				-			929,953	929,953		929,953	929,953		
Syrian Arab Republic	102,615	9,652	4,767	117,034			4,767	-		4,767	-	4,767	*
Tunisia		11,260	10,834	22,094			10,834	-		10,834	-	10,834	
Turkey				-			594,113	594,113		594,113	594,113		
TOTAL	869,980	124,057	54,168	1,048,205			5,706,788	5,652,620		5,706,788	5,141,276	565,512	

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Collection Rate	98.46%	97.82%	97.72%	97.83%	99.05%	90.09%

EC Discretionary Contribution

	Expected contribution for 2020	Received contribution for 2020	Expected contribution for 2021	Received contribution for 2021	Open Receivable for 2021
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
European Commission	596,484	596,484	596,484	596,484	

Host Country Contribution

	Expected contribution for 2020	Received contribution for 2020	Expected contribution for 2021	Received contribution for 2021	Open Receivable for 2021
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Greece	344,800	354,437	344,800	-	344,800

*Unpaid pledges for 2016 and prior years have been reduced in order for the receivable balances reflected on the current table to be in line with Umoja accounts, as reconciled in liaison with UNEP Contributions Unit: by EUR 42 for Algeria, by EUR 9,804 for the State of Libya and by EUR 1,509 for the Syrian Arab Republic.

Note: Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations: Regulation 3.5, Contributions and advances shall be considered as due and payable in full within 30 days of the receipt of the communication of the Secretary-General referred to in regulation 3.4 or on the first day of the calendar year to which they relate, whichever is later, As of 1 January of the following calendar year, the unpaid balance of such contributions and advances shall be considered to be one year in arrears.