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22<sup>nd</sup> 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

**Item Agenda Item 5: Ministerial Session**

**Contribution of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development to the Antalya Ministerial Declaration**

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## Elements from the MCSD for Consideration by COP 22

*Virtually hosted by Slovenia through videoconference from 7–9 June 2021, the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) requested the President of the MCSD and the Secretariat to inform the Meeting of the UNEP/MAP Focal Points and the 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 22) about its conclusions and recommendations, including the present elements, which have been finalized by the Secretariat following a consultation of the MCSD under the guidance of its Steering Committee.*

*As the first meeting of the MCSD to take place after the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD reaffirmed the importance of this regional inclusive, multi-stakeholder platform for experience sharing and peer learning established under the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention<sup>1</sup>. The MCSD contributes substantially to the promotion and achievement of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through best practices and flagship initiatives undertaken by MCSD Members, Observers and other partners at national, subregional and regional levels.*

1. Considerable changes have occurred in the Mediterranean: the COVID-19 pandemic has caused suffering and destruction in its wake, affecting both the environment and socio-economic systems, potentially jeopardizing the achievement of the MSSD and of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region. Pressing challenges must be addressed urgently and through immediate coordinated action and transboundary cooperation at regional, subregional, national and local levels.
2. The 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD acknowledged with appreciation the report on the [State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean \(SoED\)](#), prepared by Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre, and the [First Mediterranean Assessment Report \(MAR1\)](#) from the independent network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change ([MedECC](#)), respectively published in October and November 2020.
3. The two major regional assessment reports warn of the hefty toll that the global triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution is taking on the Mediterranean people, echoing the UNEP report titled “[Making Peace with Nature: A Scientific Blueprint to Tackle the Climate, Biodiversity and Pollution Emergencies](#)”. Rising inequality, biodiversity loss, growing impact of climate change and unrelenting pressure on ecosystems from economic sectors can lead to irreversible environmental damage, confirming the urgency of a green recovery in the post-COVID era: unless urgent and resolute action is taken to halt current trends, environmental degradation could have serious consequences for human health and livelihoods.
4. The publication of those reports during a global pandemic of zoonotic origin provides a “wake-up call” in favor of the One Health approach to bolster the resilience of the Mediterranean region and countries, a renewed call for *Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development* (MSSD subtitle), for reconciling socio-economic development and the preservation of natural resources for human health and livelihoods of current and future generations, confirming the urgency for creating synergies between complementary regional, national and local initiatives towards a green recovery and to leave no one behind in the post-COVID era.

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<sup>1</sup>“(…) For the purpose of implementing the objectives of sustainable development the Contracting Parties shall take fully into account the recommendations of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development established within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan” (Article 4 – General Obligations of the Barcelona Convention).

5. This key message echoes major global conferences such as the Fifth United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA-5), Biodiversity and Climate COPs (CBD COP 15, Kunming, China, 11-15 October 2021 and 25 April-8 May 2022, and UNFCCC COP 26, Glasgow, UK, 1-12 November 2021), the IUCN World Conservation Congress (Marseille, France, 3-11 September 2021), and the High-level Political Forum for “*Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*” (New York, 6-15 July 2021).

6. The 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD encouraged the Contracting Parties to fully consider SoED key findings as important input for designing relevant regional and national policies and strategies in the post-COVID era, and to take concrete steps to incorporate the concerns and challenges raised by the report in their environmental and sustainable development policies. Those required transformations will only be achieved through a joint endeavour that involves not only governments but also stakeholders from all categories, including local authorities, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, the private sector, and the science community, which are represented within the MCSD. Close cooperation at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels among relevant stakeholders is critical to ensure the implementation of measures required to address environmental and climate change challenges, including the most effective use of the financial resources allocated through COVID-19 recovery plans.

7. Since the publication of the [UNEP/MAP Strategic Response to the COVID-19: a blueprint for action](#) in June 2020, the MCSD and its Steering Committee have supported the advocacy for a green renaissance in the Mediterranean<sup>2</sup>, highlighting two complementary priorities: ensuring that the COVID-induced disruptions do not result in a lax approach to environmental regulations; and, advocating for practical ways in which Mediterranean countries can recover in a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient manner (*building back greener*).

8. The unprecedented mobilization of resources (stimulus packages) and policymakers’ attention devoted to recovery from COVID-19 present opportunities to accelerate enforcement, compliance and implementation at a hitherto unprecedented pace and scale in the region. The full implementation of obligations by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, supported by all stakeholders and partners, constitutes a crucial building block for a sustainable future which leaves no one behind. The MSSD, which contextualizes SDGs in the Mediterranean context, provides a blueprint for a green action towards a better world where basic needs, healthy food, adequate housing, access to education, health, culture, are guaranteed to all.

9. A resolute transformation is needed within and across all economic sectors to flick the green switch: no sector can be considered in isolation for addressing the triple environmental crisis of pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change. The 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD considered the sustainable blue economy as an enabler for building back better from the COVID-19 crisis and for achieving the MSSD and the SDGs in the Mediterranean.

10. Through their commitments on fully embracing sustainability as a driver principle, businesses from the maritime and coastal economy’s sectors are crucial for achieving sustainable development in the

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<sup>2</sup> “Green renaissance” highlights the pressing need for a recovery from COVID-19 that is more environmentally sustainable and resilient than the pre-pandemic status quo. The green renaissance may transform Mediterranean economies as part of a deliberate shift towards greater sustainability and resilience. The full implementation of obligations by the Contracting Parties and the participation of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, businesses and informed citizens, constitute crucial building blocks for a green renaissance in the Mediterranean.

Mediterranean. Effective measures to strengthen the efficiency and sustainability of Mediterranean coastal infrastructure and ports, with the view to foster decarbonization and reduction of greenhouse gas and pollutants represent a key response to the threats posed by the maritime economy. The engagement of the financial community, in particular private financing and public private partnerships, to mobilize and unlock innovative sustainable blue finance is critical to rebuild sustainable ocean prosperity while regenerating the health of the marine and coastal ecosystems.

11. The Mediterranean response to the COVID-19 crisis provides a unique opportunity for strengthening support to Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and to sustainable businesses, adapting human activities to the carrying capacity of the Mediterranean ecosystems, redesigning our resource intensive economy. The implementation of a regional framework to support the development of green and circular economy initiatives and strengthen the demand for sustainable products in the Mediterranean comes at a timely moment, as an opportunity to catalyze action and partnerships.

12. Welcoming the integration of sustainability considerations into the draft UNEP/MAP Programme of Work (PoW) 2022-2023, the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD emphasized the need for further reflection on integrated implementation of the MSSD and SDGs, improving interaction and synergies between complementary activities and initiatives, intersectoral and interinstitutional dialogue at governance level, as well as more emphasis on building and bridging with existing works and initiatives, including on education for sustainable development (ESD), awareness raising, and public trust approach in the framework of environmental policies.

13. As an integral part of the MSSD, the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD) and its Action Plan represent a unique, flexible, comprehensive framework to strengthen among the people of the Mediterranean region, in particular the youth, the conviction that the future we want should be created by us and now through synergies between bottom-up and top-down approaches.

14. Having considered the comprehensiveness of the draft PoW, MCSD Members emphasized the importance of the foundational programme 5 “Governance” for ensuring integration among the various programmes. This Governance cross-cutting programme could encompass environmental democracy, governments’ accountability, and transparency for sustainable management of natural resources and intergenerational equity.

15. Despite the urgency of challenges lying ahead, the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD welcomes encouraging signals from across the basin, such as the advanced status of implementation of [MSSD Flagship Initiatives](#). Capitalizing on those initiatives and investments made on a voluntary basis by MCSD Members, Observers and other partners into the upscaling of pilots and successful experiences are critical for putting the green renaissance in motion. Indicative of regional actions that carry significant potential for results and visibility, the MSSD Flagship Initiatives demonstrate in an exemplary way the vision of the Strategy, the collective process and the cumulative efforts of all stakeholders.

16. The 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD expressed support to promising environmental [science-policy interfaces](#), with appreciation to the work done by MedECC, and recommended to COP 22 to endorse the Summary for Policy-Makers (SPM) of the MedECC First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1). The 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD encouraged the Contracting Parties to provide adequate and long-term support to MedECC, as a successful regional initiative which replies to needs from decision-makers in terms of scientific knowledge, and as a recognized science-policy interface within the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, including further collaboration with the MCSD and its Steering Committee on climate and environmental matters.

17. The 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD also remarked the crucial role of parliamentarians networks, such as the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development (COMPSUD), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (PA OSCE), in fostering the regional high-level scientific discourse in the context of parliamentary diplomacy, contributing to the MSSD implementation at local, national, and regional levels. Parliaments across the Mediterranean play a crucial role in promoting dialogue between experts and policymakers, as they hold the responsibility to inform and guide governments' strategies towards effective environmental protection and climate action.

18. The 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD agreed that the endeavour for a green renaissance will rely on new, pro-sustainability thinking that adequate advocacy, information, and outreach can foster, including to further enhance the MCSD's profile and MSSD's visibility in the region and beyond, noting that the private sector and citizens must become directly involved in the Strategy implementation, through communication campaigns and ad-hoc events.

19. The MCSD renewed its call for strengthening gender equality through gender-sensitive actions and related targets in the work of UNEP/MAP, including specific actions to integrate further gender considerations in meeting organization, projects preparation and implementation (e.g. ensuring women's and men's equal participation).

20. Having appreciated the draft conclusions from the mid-term evaluations of the MSSD and of the SCP Regional Action Plan, the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD invited the Contracting Parties to provide support for accelerating the MSSD implementation, promoting cross-sectoral approaches, including by channeling resources mobilized for the recovery from COVID-19 to achieve the required change recommended by SoED.

21. Further align the MSSD with relevant SDGs, with more action-oriented targets, including through the next review of the MSSD, should boost synergies between (a) securing compliance with and enforcement of existing obligations; and, (b) transforming socio-economic systems for a post-COVID green renaissance.

22. Beyond the call for more advocacy, information, communication and outreach, and based on the MSSD mid-term evaluation, the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD formulated the following recommendations:

- Identify and enhance funding opportunities and potential donors to support the MSSD implementation: the MSSD should be better funded, visible, and attractive for all stakeholders;
  - Promote experience sharing, including through an online platform/repository (website gathering relevant initiatives), scale up MSSD Flagship Initiatives, and develop a MSSD label scheme;
  - Reaffirm the value of the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) as an innovative and cost-effective incentive for promoting dialogue among Mediterranean countries and for supporting volunteer Contracting Parties in streamlining their national policies in synergy with the MSSD and the SDGs;
  - Further reaffirm the value of science-policy interfaces and enhance opportunities for regional dialogue between experts and decision-makers and the exchange of policy strategies and legislative practices to accelerate the MSSD and the SDGs implementation across the region; and,
  - Enhance monitoring mechanisms and review the level of update of indicators according to current needs and capacities for the Mediterranean sustainability agenda, including the MSSD and SDGs.
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