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Agenda Item 7: IMAP Data Policy

Elements for IMAP Data Policy

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Note by the Secretariat

The Contracting Parties, with Decision IG.24/2 (COP 21, Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019), “*Endorse[d] the Main Elements and Roadmap for the Preparation of a UNEP/MAP Data Management Policy, as set out in Annex II to the present Decision, and request[ed] the Secretariat (INFO/RAC) to develop such Policy, in close cooperation with the other MAP components and with the full involvement of the Contracting Parties, and to submit it to the Contracting Parties at their 22nd Meeting (COP 22),”*”.

In this context the MAP Data Policy has been developed and will be submitted to next COP22. Specific metric annexes related to all the UNEP/MAP data flows managed by INFO/RAC will be developed during the next biennium and will complement the general MAP Data Policy.

Specific Data Policy Annexes for each data flow will be developed by INFO/RAC under the coordination of the Secretariat and in close consultation with all relevant MAP Components through an in-depth discussion with Countries, ensured by planned Bilateral Meetings postponed to the next biennium, due to the delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is essential that the Contracting Parties give the maximum availability and priority to the participation in the IMAP data policy definition process in order to establish a common and efficient data management to achieve and share the essential knowledge base for the Mediterranean Sea needed for next QSR.

1. Elements for IMAP Data Policy

In view of the development of the specific IMAP Data Policy Annex, the present document is proposed as state of play of its development including a preliminary collection of the elements discussed during the following meetings:

- Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Biodiversity and Fisheries (Marseille, France, 12-13 February 2019);
- Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Pollution (Podgorica, Montenegro, 2-3 April 2019);
- Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Marine Litter (Podgorica, Montenegro, 4-5 April 2019);
- Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Biodiversity and Fisheries (Rome, Italy, 21 May 2019);
- Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Coast and Hydrography (Rome, Italy, 21-22 May 2019);
- Fourteenth Meeting of MED POL Focal Points (Istanbul, Turkey, 27-29 May 2019);
- Thirteenth Meeting of REMPEC Focal Points (Valletta, Malta 11- 3 June 2019);
- Fourteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points (Portorož, Slovenia, 18-21 June 2019).
- Integrated Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), videoconference 1-3 December 2020.

1.2 IMAP Data availability

An important starting point is to agree about data to be considered suitable for the IMAP reporting as follows:

1.2.1 Testing phase data

The contribute of Contracting Parties into the **testing phase** of the IMAP Pilot Info System has been of utmost importance and has enabled detecting and sorting out arising issues. It has been also an asset for the first elaboration by INFO/RAC of a **Technical Guide**, an additional useful tool complementing the **User Guide**, already developed for the testing phase, to support the Contracting Parties in the IMAP process. Both guidelines can be downloaded at <http://imappilot.info-rac.org>.

The first **IMAP call is open** and includes both new monitoring data generated in **2020**, as well as available monitoring data collected **prior to 2020**, if their content is compatible with format required by the respective Data Standards and Data Dictionaries adopted for IMAP Common Indicators.

The IMAP Pilot Info System is ready to receive past and new data. **The uploaded testing files need control and validation by Countries.** To avoid new efforts and repetitions INFO/RAC needs confirmation by CPs about the nature of the data uploaded in the testing phase. CPs need to clarify which of the following options is valid for their data sets:

1. They are only **test data that are NOT for inclusion** into the IMAP Pilot Info System;
2. They are **official data** sent before the opening of the IMAP call, already **validated and to be considered eligible for inclusion** as part of mandatory reporting.

To facilitate CPs work, INFO/RAC has renamed the files. It is required to CPs to access the IMAP Pilot Info System at <http://imappilot.info-rac.org>, go to the section **Upload** and search and check the file belonging to their country whose name start with **“TEST”**.

- ✓ If the right **option is 1**, CP can **delete** the file;
- ✓ if data are in the **option 2**, press the validation bottom if the file is in “**Compliant**” status
- ✓ if data are in the **option 2**, liaise with INFO/RAC if the file is in “**Not compliant**” status.

In any case, CPs need to send an official e-mail to INFO/RAC (imap@info-rac.org) explaining which test files have to be accepted and maintained and which ones have to be deleted. The **saved files will be renamed and integrated** in the system as new IMAP call data.

1.2.2 MED POL data migration

MEDPOL Info System database migration into the IMAP Info System has been successfully carried out by INFO/RAC, in consultation with MEDPOL during 2020/2021, as initially proposed and confirmed by the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points, Rome, Italy, 29-31 May 2017.

Monitoring data for nutrients and contaminants (sediment and biota) reported using the MED POL Metadata Templates have been migrated to the new IMAP Info System using Data Standards adopted for IMAP Common Indicators 13 (Concentration of key nutrients in water column), 14 (Chlorophyll-a concentration in water column) and 17 (Concentration of key harmful contaminants measured in the relevant matrix (biota, sediment, seawater)).

In total **69 files** have been revised and migrated, including a data review phase, in terms of formatting, of alignment with Data Dictionaries, and further checks necessary to make the files compliant in the System.

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 Info System in a standardized format and stored on an infrastructure able to guarantee its integrity and preservation over time.

It is important to remark that the **periodic collection of MED POL monitoring data will become part of the IMAP Call** through the reporting for IMAP Common Indicators for EO5 and EO9 **that will substitute the data reporting into the MED POL Info System (no more active)** or other ways of data submission.

1.2.3 Projects datasets

The lack of monitoring data leads to explore **other possible sources** to fill the gaps. It is up to the CPs to **assess which other sources are available and endorse them** as official IMAP data sets.

Criteria for validation of other available datasets should be defined by Countries in a common and agreed way in order to avoid incoherent datasets in IMAP.

In this context, **projects** occupy a relevant position and although their use is allowed, the following rules should be applied:

- the **project source** should be always reported in remarks;
- monitoring data related to projects should be collected in **distinct files** and not mixed with other monitoring data produced by IMAP national monitoring programmes.

1.2.4 IMAP Call

As requested by the IMAP call opened in June 2020, all IMAP users are expected to make the maximum effort to report data into the IMAP Info System, also for the production of the Mediterranean Quality Status Report (**2023 MED QSR**). The Report on the state of the quality of the Mediterranean (hereinafter

QSR), which aims to evaluate the main results concerning the "state" of the marine environment, **will mainly built on IMAP indicators and the relative monitoring data.**

Till now, regardless the status (Draft, Compliant, Not Compliant, Valid, Not Valid, Published), CPs have reported by uploading a total of **84 files** into the IMAP Info System.

To facilitate a high response to the IMAP Call, INFO/RAC, in close cooperation with CU and the other MAP Components, is ensuring a constant and cross-cutting support for the reporting of all the IMAP Common Indicators at two different levels:

- supporting each IMAP user for Common Indicators reporting through an **IMAP helpdesk**
- supporting each Contracting Party through **Bilateral Assistance/Trainings meetings**

The INFO/RAC **IMAP help desk**, has provided and has ensured a continuous technical support to Contracting Parties (CPs) to facilitate understanding, access, and use of the IMAP Info System. Full technical assistance has been provided in the process of filling-in DSs and data submission.

In addition in the biennium 2020-2021, **Bilateral Assistance/Training meetings** have been organized by INFO/RAC according to the availability of Contracting Parties to provide via videoconference an organic and structured presentation for monitoring data reporting including:

- a clear picture of the IMAP Info System and its functionalities;
- specific explanations and support for the correct understanding of Data Standards and how to fill in them;
- an overall guide about the consultation of Data Dictionaries;
- information about the available supporting tools (utility check and user guide);
- support to provide a clear state of art of the monitoring data availability in countries;
- support to ensure compliance of the filled Data Standards;
- information in order to complete the list of IMAP users still pending in some countries.

In order to maximize the benefit of a Training/Assistance meetings, each country should:

- ensure the participation of all the national IMAP Users;
- have already tried to access and work on the system;
- has already made an internal check about all available data for IMAP reporting.

Furthermore, INFO/RAC and the respective MAP Components help desk accounts established during the testing phase, remain active to provide full support to the Contracting Parties:

- imap@info-rac.org for any problem relating to access, data standards download and upload, any difficulty that users can encounter during the process, including clarifications and advice of the type of content requested by the system;
- pollmlitter_imap@info-rac.org to provide clarifications and advice related to scientific aspects of the information requested by the system for Pollution and Marine Litter;
- bio_imap@info-rac.org to provide clarifications and advice related to scientific aspects of the information requested by the system for Biodiversity and Non-Indigenous Species;
- coasthydro_imap@info-rac.org to provide clarifications and advice related to scientific aspects of the information requested by the system for Coast and Hydrography.

1.3 IMAP Users network

CP User profiles have been further updated and refined according to Contracting Parties advise.

The role of Contracting Parties users has been detailed as per the table below:

Official **IMAP Users** are responsible to upload, validate and officially release monitoring data related to IMAP Common Indicators, in line with the following three data management levels:

Level I - Upload: users uploading the monitoring data file and performing the **compliance quality check** - the system will generate an error file if the monitoring data file is NOT compliant with Data Standards and Data Dictionaries.

Level II - Validation: users performing the process of quality control of monitoring data –the system doesn't generate any automatic output. **Validation** confirms that all controls related to the content have been successfully passed.

Level III - Official release: users officially releasing monitoring data at country level as a final step. Users have the duty to confirm the **official release**.

The 3-level users subdivision allows the CPs to differentiate the responsibility level according to the internal national organization on data management.

An example of a possible structure could be:

Level I: *scientific institutions responsible for data production and elaboration (i.e. monitoring and research institutes)*

Level II: *national institutions responsible for data collection and validation (i.e. Environmental National Agency)*

Level III: *national entities responsible for the official release of the data (i.e. National Focal Point)*

Nevertheless, Contracting Parties can decide to appoint the **same user even for all the 3 levels**.

In order to maximize the reporting data on the IMAP Info System, an integration between the IMAP Users Network and INFO/RAC Focal Points will be promoted and facilitated.

INFO/RAC Focal Points:

- act as facilitators among IMAP users and INFO/RAC,
- ensure full collaboration of all national institutions for IMAP reporting;
- allow the sharing and exchange of knowledge and information for data reporting purposes on IMAP Info System;
- provide the state of art of IMAP reporting at Country level;
- provide suggestions and observations to improve Information Standards.
- coordinate the participation of all the national IMAP Users in the IMAP Assistance/Training meeting.

1.3 Next steps

In the general framework of the agreed roadmap on MAP data policy and taking into account countries needs, capacities and challenges caused by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that the Secretariat is informed by each Country about the following aspects:

- ✓ the state of art of the **availability** of monitoring data for IMAP;
- ✓ any **delay** affecting the planned timeline in IMAP user appointment or data uploading;

- ✓ the **sources** of data used in monitoring data reporting;
- ✓ any **restriction** in use of reported data;
- ✓ completion of **IMAP data collection** for the **11 selected IMAP Common Indicators** and clear understanding of quality controls outputs as follows from compliance check run on IMAP Info System;
- ✓ preparation for the reporting of the new data flows that will be implemented with the completion of IMAP Info System for the **remaining IMAP Common Indicators**;
- ✓ publishing **a set of validated data accessible at the regional level** (each CP provides assessment products of data referred to its own country);
- ✓ agreement with the other CPs under the INFO/RAC and CU coordination on **a common level of aggregation of data**, to assure wide visualization in the Mediterranean Region.