



UNITED
NATIONS

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UNEP (DEPI)/MED IG.22/26



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UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

2 February 2016
Original: English

19th Ordinary 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

Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016

Agenda item 6: Ministerial Session

Draft Athens Declaration

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DRAFT ATHENS DECLARATION

1. We, Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the Barcelona Convention) and its Protocols, meeting in Athens, Greece on 11 February 2016,
2. *Celebrating* with pride the 40 years of the regional cooperation framework established through the Mediterranean Action Plan and the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, and *being aware* of its significant contribution for achieving a healthy and productive Mediterranean sea and coast and of the great progress spurred by the solidarity and shared commitments of the MAP system and its partners,
3. *Recalling* the historic and transformative body of decisions, strategies, plans of action, ecological objectives and targets, and programmes of measures that have been providing guidance and shaping action at regional, national and local level within the scope of the MAP-Barcelona Convention mandate,
4. *Recalling* the aim of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, which is to address the accelerating degradation of the world's oceans and coastal areas through the sustainable management and use of the marine and coastal environment and by engaging neighbouring countries in comprehensive and specific actions to protect their shared marine environment,
5. *Recalling* the outcome document of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015, its Sustainable Development Goals and especially Sustainable Development Goal 14 to 'conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development',
6. *Recalling* the agreement for combating climate change adopted at the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris, on 12 December 2015,
7. *Taking note of* the Declaration of the Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change of the Union for the Mediterranean adopted in Athens, on 13 May 2014, as well as the Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy adopted in Brussels, on 17 November 2015,
8. *Determined* to continue our common efforts to tackle the existing and emerging challenges to the achievement of the good environmental status of the Mediterranean, and *being aware* that this increases expectations from the operation of the UNEP/MAP, its Regional Activity Centres and Programmes and its various strategies and action plans,
9. *Welcoming* the adoption by COP 19 of several new and updated MAP-Barcelona Convention regional policies, strategies and action plans to respond effectively to the growing environmental challenges that face the region and boost the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols,
10. *Welcoming* the efforts and measures taken by Contracting Parties and the Secretariat in the past biennium to strengthen and stabilize the MAP system and its activities and to respond to the complex challenges of the Mediterranean with renewed trust in the value and relevance of the MAP-Barcelona Convention and its Protocols,

11. *Recognizing with appreciation* the valuable contribution of national, regional, and international non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in the work and achievements of the MAP-Barcelona Convention and its Protocols,
12. *Decide to renew* our commitment and step up our efforts to address together the challenges related to environmental protection and sustainable development of the Mediterranean Sea and coast, in the global framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,
13. *Resolve* to accelerate our efforts - legal, administrative and financial – so that they can match the Mediterranean Action Plan’s past history of achievements and its ambitious goals,
14. *Commit* to further implement the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols at regional and national level, with the application of the ecosystem approach as an overarching principle to achieve the Mediterranean Ecological Objectives and related targets towards good environmental status of the Mediterranean and to contribute to sustainable development,
15. *Commit* to enhance measures to reduce pressures on marine and coastal environment, to stop the decline of endangered species and ecosystem services, to promote resource efficiency and circular economy, and to enhance SCP practices and sustainable lifestyles,
16. *Commit* to implement the UNEP/MAP 2016-2021 Mid-Term Strategy, as the strategic framework for a healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse, contributing to sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations,
17. *Decide to use* the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development produced by a wide stakeholder process as a strategic guiding document for securing a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region consistent with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and encourage all partners to promote and support its implementation,
18. *Commit* to implement the instruments, programmes, action plans and guidelines adopted at COP 19 (including the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Offshore Protocol of the Barcelona Convention, the Regional Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2016-2021), the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean, the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework, the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria, Updated Action Plans Concerning “Cetaceans”, “Coralligenous and Other Calcareous Bio-concretions”, and “Species Introductions and Invasive Species”, the Roadmap for a Comprehensive Coherent Network of Well-Managed MPAs, and the Reform of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development) as crucial means for the achievement of the objectives of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols with renewed impetus,
19. *Commit* to take the necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation of the National Action Plans in accordance with the LBS Protocol of the Barcelona Convention and the related legally binding Regional Plans to progressively eliminate pollution reaching the Mediterranean sea with a particular focus on marine litter as an emerging issue of regional and global concern and with the goal of achieving its significant reduction by 2024 in synergy with relevant initiatives at global and regional levels,
20. *Reaffirm* our commitment to promote adaptation to climate change and increase the resilience of the Mediterranean marine and coastal, natural and socioeconomic, systems to the impacts of climate change in collaboration with the United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change and in synergy with the Union of the Mediterranean,

21. *Commit* to continue our efforts for the implementation of the Action Plan related to the ICZM Protocol as a strategic tool for reaching sustainability in coastal zones,
22. *Commit* to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns and as a first step implement the SCP Action Plan for the Mediterranean,
23. *Resolve* to enhance public awareness and the advancement of the educational systems towards sustainability and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Mediterranean, *inter alia*, through the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development,
24. *Welcome* the establishment of the Environment Friendly City Awards as a means to promote awareness on the importance of coastal cities and communities' efforts in improving their resilience and addressing pressures on the marine and coastal environment, in particular through the implementation of SCP and circular economy principles,
25. *Invite* the President of the Contracting Parties to forward this declaration and the outcome of the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties, for the attention of UNEA, other regional seas conventions and programmes, and other relevant organizations.