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5th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group

Rome, Italy, 14-15 September 2015

Report of the Correspondence Group on Monitoring, Biodiversity and Fisheries

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Introduction

1. The meeting of the Correspondence Group on Monitoring Biodiversity and Fisheries (**CORMON Biodiversity and Fisheries**) was organised in collaboration with the Turkish government. It took place in Ankara, in Turkey on 26-27 June 2014. The objective of the meeting was to discuss methodologies and approaches, monitoring specifics in relation to the biodiversity and non-indigenous species related common indicators, based on the Secretariat proposed draft Monitoring Guidance. In addition, it aimed to give information and opportunity to comment to Contracting Parties on the on-going monitoring work of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (**GFCM**).

Participation

2. The meeting was attended by experts from the following Contracting Parties: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, European Union, France, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, the State of Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, and Spain, Turkey.
3. The Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) and the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) were also represented at the meeting.
4. The Secretariat of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) was represented at the meeting.
5. The list of participants is attached as Annex III to this report.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting

6. The meeting was opened at 9.00 a.m. on Thursday 26 June 2014. Mr Murat Turan, speaking on behalf of the General Directorate of Environmental Management of Turkey, welcomed the participants and emphasized that Turkey was fully aware of the importance of the EcAp process launched under the Barcelona Convention and confirmed the commitment of his country to work for the wellbeing of the Mediterranean populations, in particular through improving the quality of the marine and coastal environment.
7. The Secretariat of UNEP-MAP/Barcelona Convention (the **Secretariat**) also welcomed the participants and recalled the importance of this first monitoring meeting in the field of biodiversity in the Mediterranean, after shortly describing the key deliveries of the Ecosystem Approach (**EcAp**) process. In addition, the Secretariat shortly described the objectives of the meeting and expressed its gratitude to Turkey for hosting the meeting.

Agenda item 2-3: Scope and purpose of the meeting and election of officers and adoption of the agenda

8. The Secretariat introduced the Provisional Agenda of the meeting contained in document UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG 400/1 and annotated in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG 400/2. The flow of the meeting was explained and the participants were invited to review and adopt the Agenda. The Agenda as adopted by the meeting is contained in Annex II to the present report, with a presentation to take place under Any Other Business from the side of GFCM, on their on-going work on monitoring in the field of EO3.
9. The meeting elected its officers as follows:

Chairperson:	Mr Murat Turan/Ms Nazli Yenel (Turkey)
Vice-Chairpersons:	Mr George Akl (Lebanon) and Mr Leonardo Tunesi (Italy)
Rapporteur:	Mr Borut Mavric (Slovenia)

Agenda item 4: General introduction of the draft Monitoring Guidance and process ahead on EcAp monitoring

10. The Secretariat provided a short briefing on the process of implementation of the Ecosystem Approach roadmap and the expected results during the biennium and beyond. In this context the importance of the process was highlighted and the work of the CORMONs to agree on an Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme by the next Meeting of the Contracting Parties at the end of 2015 (COP19). It was underlined that the common indicators have been chosen during the Integrated Correspondence Group on GES and Targets meeting, in February, 2014, as the most mature indicators, on which monitoring can already start from 2016 on. As such, they are the basis of the draft Monitoring Guidance of the Secretariat.
11. In addition, the Secretariat highlighted that the preparation of the draft monitoring guidance in relation to biodiversity (and also non-indigenous species greatly benefitted from a Scientific Workshop that was co-organized with the PERSEUS, IRIS- SES, DEVOTES and COCONET projects.
12. The Secretariat introduced the working document of the meeting UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.400/3 General Monitoring Guidance of the Secretariat, applicable for all Ecological Objectives and asked the participants to give their views, recommendations on the draft, which can be found in Annex I to this report.

Agenda item 5: Monitoring Guidance in relation to Biodiversity: discussion of the draft Guidance Document on EO1

13. The Secretariat introduced the working document of the meeting UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.400/4 "Monitoring Guidance on Ecological Objective 1: Biodiversity "and asked the participants to give their views, recommendations on the draft, which can be found in Annex I to this report.
14. In addition, to the above recommendation, some Contracting Parties found important to note that the role of communities cannot be underlined enough, not only in relation to monitoring biodiversity, but also in relation to applying relevant management measures.
15. One Contracting Party furthermore asked to ensure that coastal areas and coastal developments and their impacts will be addressed adequately.
16. The Secretariat reminded the participants to focus the discussions on monitoring and at the same time informed participants, that they will be welcome to discuss measures/management related issues in the upcoming October EcAp Coordination Group Meeting, where the Secretariat will present its draft EcAp Measures Gap Analysis.

Agenda item 6: Monitoring Guidance in relation to Biodiversity: discussion of the draft Guidance Document on EO1, with a focus on the common indicators: Habitat distributional range and Condition of the habitat's typical species and communities

17. The Secretariat presented the relevant part of the UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG.400/4 in details in relation to the common indicators: Habitat distributional range and Condition of the habitat's typical species and communities. She asked the participants to give their views, recommendations on the draft, which can be found in Annex I to this report.

18. In addition, some Contracting Parties proposed changes to the terminology of the indicators, pertaining to the list of habitats presented in order to avoid confusion and be in line with relevant language of EU legislation and other international conventions.
19. The Secretariat explained that the terminology is in line with that of the SPA and Biodiversity Protocol of the Barcelona Convention , and offered to give more explanation in the Guidance on the links to the EU Habitat terminology

Agenda item 7: Monitoring Guidance in relation to Biodiversity: discussion of the draft Guidance Document on EO1, with a focus on the common indicators species distributional range, population abundance and population demographic characteristics

20. The Secretariat and RAC/SPA presented the relevant part of the UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.400/4 in details in relation to the common indicators : species distributional range, population abundance and population demographic characteristics. The participants were requested to give their views, recommendations on the draft, which can be found in Annex I to this report.
21. In addition, participants gave early reactions on possible update of the indicative list of habitats and species and asked for the early creation of the online expert-groups mentioned in Annex I that will be working on the update of the indicative list of habitats and species, with a leadership of a volunteer country.

Agenda item 8-9: Monitoring Guidance in relation to Non-Indigenous Species: general introduction and discussion of the draft Guidance Document on EO2, with the focus on the common indicator: Trends in abundance, temporal occurrence and spatial distribution of non-indigenous species, notably in risk areas in relation to the main vectors and pathways of spreading of such species

22. The Secretariat presented “Monitoring Guidance on Ecological Objective 2: “Non Indigenous Species ” and the participants were requested to give their views, recommendations on the draft, which can be found in Annex I to this report.
23. In addition, one participant noted the need to include in the text of the definition of non-native species, genetically modified organisms and their potential hybrids in the Guidance Document, according to the most recent definitions of the International Council for Exploration of the Sea.

Agenda item 10: Key recommendations of the Correspondence Group on Monitoring, Biodiversity and Fisheries

24. The participants summarized their key recommendations in relation to biodiversity and fisheries monitoring, which can be found in Annex I to this report.

Agenda item 11: Any Other Business

25. The GFCM Secretariat gave a presentation, describing their on-going work in relation to fisheries monitoring and their specific proposal on the definition of Good Environmental Status and associated indicators and targets for commercially exploited fish and shellfish populations.

26. The Secretariat highlighted the close cooperation between the Secretariats of GFCM and UNEP-MAP, working together, with the aim to include already in the EcAp initial phase of monitoring also fisheries.
27. The participants welcomed the presentation and highlighted the importance of fisheries for EcAp monitoring, its close links with biodiversity and gave specific recommendations, as lined out in Annex III to this Report.
28. In addition, some experts underlined the importance of starting monitoring sea floor integrity as soon as possible under EcAp and to aim into the direction of integrating it into the list of indicators by COP19.
29. The Secretariat highlighted that it already addresses sea-floor integrity as much as possible, through the Monitoring Guidance on EO1, but noting not only that it is not part of the current list of integrated indicators, also cost implications, it does not propose to include it in the initial monitoring guidance. At the same time it asked interested countries to show leadership on this topic and send relevant information on the indicator, to assist its further development.

Agenda item 12: Closure of the meeting

30. The meeting was closed by the Chair, Ms Nazli Yenal, at 16.00, on 27 June, 2014.

Annex I
List of Participants

List of participants

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**Annex II
Agenda**

Agenda

- Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting (09.00-09.15)
- Agenda item 2-3: Scope and purpose of the meeting and election of officers and adoption of the agenda (09:15-09.30)
- Agenda item 4: General introduction of the draft Monitoring Guidance and process ahead on Ecap monitoring, (09:30-10.00)
- Agenda item 5: Monitoring Guidance in relation to Biodiversity: discussion of the draft Guidance Document on EO1 (10.00-11.00)
- Agenda item 6: Monitoring Guidance in relation to Biodiversity: discussion of the draft Guidance Document on EO1, with a focus on the common indicators: Habitat distributional range and Condition of the habitat's typical species and communities (11.30-13.30)
- Agenda item 7: Monitoring Guidance in relation to Biodiversity: discussion of the draft Guidance Document on EO1, with a focus on the common indicators: Species distributional range, Population abundance and Population demographic characteristics (15.00-18.00)
- Agenda item 8: General introduction of the Monitoring Guidance in relation to Non - Indigenous Species (09.30-10.30)
- Agenda item 9: Monitoring Guidance in relation to Non-Indigenous Species: discussion of the draft Guidance Document on EO2 with a focus on the common indicator: Trends in the abundance, temporal occurrence and spatial distribution of non-indigenous species, particularly invasive non indigenous species, notably in risk areas in relation to the main vectors and pathways of spreading of such species" (10.30-12.00)
- Agenda item 10: Key recommendations of the Correspondence Group on Monitoring, Biodiversity and Fisheries (15.00 - 17.30)
- Agenda item 11: Any Other Business (17.30-18.00)
- Agenda item 12: Closure of the meeting (18.00)

Annex III
Conclusion and Recommendations of the Biodiversity & Fisheries
Correspondence Group on monitoring

Annex III

Conclusion and Recommendations of the Biodiversity & Fisheries Correspondence Group on monitoring

General recommendations of the Biodiversity and Fisheries Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CorMon Biodiversity and Fisheries) on the Draft Monitoring Guidance (including General Monitoring Guidance and specific Guidance on Biodiversity):

- Further highlight the importance of the risk based approach by providing a concrete example of how pressures and biodiversity components affected can be interlinked to target the requirement for monitoring;
- Highlight the importance of mapping of multiple pressures/stressors;
- Further address linkages between habitats and species in line with the risk based approach;
- Connectivity linked to oceanographic patterns to be further highlighted;
- Further highlight the importance of active involvement and possible roles of community in the successful implementation in the monitoring, including citizens science. This is best achieved by the active involvement of the local communities in the management practices.

The experts of the Biodiversity and Fisheries Correspondence Group on Monitoring gave the following recommendations in relation to the common indicators of Habitat distribution range and Condition of the habitat's typical species and communities:

- On habitat distributional range, while the COP 18 Decision does not provide for habitat extent as an indicator, monitoring habitat extent is recommended as the more applicable approach;
- Provide for greater flexibility in the draft Monitoring Guidance for Biodiversity for scale of habitat mapping to include i.e. 1X1km grid to accommodate smaller states and also i.e. 250 m X 250 m in relation to the coastal and offshore particularities.

Regarding species distributional range, population abundance and population demographic characteristics:

- While the importance of opportunistic monitoring was highlighted, it was also noted that it alone cannot guarantee adequate results;
- Next to census from ships, census from planes, surveys from land, capture-recapture, stranded or beached specimens and rookeries census, coastal survey from sea was and biopsies also asked to be added to common methodologies key to these common indicators;
- In future work of CORMON address further how to adopt methodologies to different species and sub-regions;
- Analyze further and prioritize between methodologies also based on a cost-efficiency basis;
- Further address links between species and habitats in light of the SPA Protocol.

The experts of the Biodiversity and Fisheries Correspondence Group on Monitoring gave the following recommendations in relation to the common indicator on non-indigenous species:

- Revisit table 1 of the main text to make more applicable to Mediterranean, highlighting that the vectors listed are provided as examples for estimating pathway intensity to assist the Parties, and is not a definitive list ;
- Regarding monitoring strategy, to avoid in the text monitoring in warmer months as some countries are also looking at colder months for some macrophytes species;
- Omit reference to number of monitoring stations in the text as this should be deciphered by the Parties on a case by case basis;
- Refer to data available through practice, monitoring, done under the auspices of IMO.
- Revisit the calculation of parameter A of the trend indicator on number of NIS to include comparison of species names;
- Revisit the text of the monitoring strategy to include also pristine areas far from the main entry points that may be affected by for example recreational boating;
- Revisit the abundance component of the trend indicator to provide wording regarding a rule of thumb for additional optional estimation of abundance on a case by case basis, for which wording will be volunteered by certain experts of the meeting;
- Add further useful bibliographic references volunteered by expert(s) of the meeting
- Supplement the trend indicator 'factsheet' with a footnote explaining the origin of the numbering of the indicator;
- Provide wording in the text of the guidance with reference to port monitoring, for cost efficiency purposes, the availability of criteria for exemptions of ballast water treatment.

The Secretariat is requested to:

- Follow-up on the above recommendations of the CORMON Biodiversity and Fisheries in the further development of the Monitoring Guidance;
- Contact Contracting parties regarding the nomination of experts to specific future (online) working groups that will discuss revision and specification needs of the initial species and habitats lists, as well as the application of the risk based approach in relation to them, inviting Contracting Parties at the same time to volunteer as lead countries and names of experts for these two working groups;
- Hold a specific Workshop in relation to pelagic habitats proposed optional sub-indicator;
- Liaise with GFCM to ensure that fisheries will be part of the initial monitoring from 2016 on and as such included in the draft Monitoring Guidance as soon as possible;
- Liaise with the ECAP socioeconomic component (working group) to ensure that the effect of activities in the coastal zone on biodiversity are taken into consideration;
- Share the draft Socio-Economic Report with the biodiversity monitoring experts for their comments and present it in the next Integrated CORMON group);
- Look into ways of strengthening taxonomic expertise and fully build on their knowledge for biodiversity monitoring under the ecosystem approach, especially in relation to condition of the habitat's typical species and communities and on species distributional range;
- Keep Contracting Parties informed on the upcoming Workshop on benthic biotic indices to be organized by the Perseus project;

- For species distributional range, population abundance and population demographic characteristics information, to make best use of data and monitoring programs of different institutions;
- In the long-term aim to create a shared data base for the EcAp monitoring program;
- Further highlight importance of sea-floor integrity and under-water noise in relation to biodiversity, especially when it comes to assessment and analyze the possibility of including indicators in this field as soon as possible.

Contracting Parties were encouraged to:

- Send written comments on the draft Monitoring Guidance to the Secretariat by 20 July;
- Give input into the SPA RAC Survey and Monitoring Habitats and Species on their ongoing monitoring activities;
- In relation to EO2, provide wording on cases for optional further estimation of abundance and further bibliographic references.