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20th 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

Tirana, Albania, 17-20 December 2017

Agenda item 5: Ministerial Session

**Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with focus on Sustainable Development
Goal 14: pollution and biodiversity**

Background Note for Ministerial Discussions at COP 20

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UNEP/MAP
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Note by the Secretariat

Following the conclusions of the 83rd (Tirana, Albania, 25-26 October 2017) and 84th (Athens, Greece, 19-20 June 2017) Bureau meetings on the theme of COP 20, and the endorsement of the theme of the Ministerial session of COP 20 by the MAP Focal Points Meeting (Athens, Greece, 12-15 September 2017), the Secretariat has prepared the attached Background Note for Ministerial discussion at COP 20.

The attached document suggests the context for the session, taking into due consideration the most relevant evolutions at the global level as well as the implementation of relevant UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention strategic documents, and the questions to facilitate the interventions and discussion by Ministers and/or Heads of Delegation during the Ministerial session of 19 December 2017.

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with focus on Sustainable Development Goal 14: Pollution and Biodiversity

Background Note for the Ministerial Session at COP 20

Developments at the global level to implement pollution and biodiversity related goals and targets

1. The 20th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 20) comes at a decisive stage for global sustainable development as well as for the future of the Mediterranean region, with the focus on implementing the internationally agreed, transformative global goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the strategic documents of UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention adopted at COP 19. This is the initial stage of implementation, monitoring and partnerships that will pave the way for the future we want.
2. At the global level, a number of major events have taken place in 2017 and are relevant to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a focus on ocean and/or environmental issues, including on pollution and biodiversity. They include (in chronological order):
 - (i) the UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (New York, USA, 5-9 June 2017). UNEP/MAP registered six commitments to action during the Conference, and many others were submitted by Contracting Parties jointly or with inputs from the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat;
 - (ii) the Meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (New York, USA, 10-19 July 2017) with the theme “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”, focusing *inter alia* on SDG 14, and with 43 countries presenting their national voluntary reviews. The relevant processes for the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025, such as the Simplified Peer Review, can act as a bridge between the global and national levels;
 - (iii) the Fourth Session of the Preparatory Committee Established by the UN General Assembly Resolution 69/292: Development of an International Legally Binding Instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (New York, USA, 10-21 July 2017), whose eventual outcome will have a profound impact on ocean governance, very relevant for our region and closely linked with the efforts to achieve Aichi Target 11 in the Mediterranean;
 - (iv) the Conference “Our Ocean, an ocean for life” (Malta, 5-6 October 2017), which delivered an extraordinary level of commitments and results relevant to the achievement of SDG 14, including in the Mediterranean region (437 tangible and measurable commitments; EUR 7,270,361,251 in financial pledges; 2,554,234 square kilometres of additional Marine Protected Areas); and
 - (v) the UN Environment Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya, 4-6 December 2017) with a High-Level Segment addressing the overarching theme “Towards a Pollution Free Planet” and promoting “The Clean Planet Pledge”, a collection of public commitments to end pollution in all its forms. To this end, the “Beat Pollution” campaign has registered, on web and social media, more than 529,000 individual commitments to clean up the planet, as of 17 October 2017.
3. The above events have expressed the need for approaching sustainable development in a holistic, integrated manner. They have generated increased attention to the environmental and sustainable development challenges at the global – but also at the regional and national – level.

Furthermore, they represent concrete steps in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and of SDG 14 in particular. The emphasis is now squarely placed on action, as shown by the processes of the UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, the Conference “Our Ocean, an ocean for life”, and the UN Environment Assembly. Pollution and biodiversity feature prominently in these meetings and in the relevant commitments. COP 20 is, therefore, a timely opportunity to showcase the importance that our region places on the implementation of pollution and biodiversity related commitments, in order to protect the environment and to contribute to sustainable development.

4. The United Nations Environment Programme launched the Clean Seas Campaign (#CleanSeas) in February 2017, with the aim of engaging governments, the general public, civil society and the private sector in the fight against marine plastic litter, in order to address the root-cause of marine litter by targeting the production and consumption of non-recoverable and single-use plastic. A number of Mediterranean actors have joined the campaign, showing commitment to action for a marine litter-free Mediterranean Sea.

UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention: the regional framework to implement pollution and biodiversity related goals and targets

5. The 2030 Agenda welcomes the cooperation of regional and sub-regional commissions and organizations for follow-up and review providing useful opportunities for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets and encourages states to identify the most suitable regional forum in which to engage. The 2030 Agenda encourages states to develop ambitious national responses for its overall implementation. Regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels which are country-led and country-driven are also given high importance.

6. The UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 as a strategic guiding document for all stakeholders and partners, the Regional Strategies and Action Plans, adopted by the system, as well as specific measures taken by the Contracting Parties, aim at controlling and preventing marine pollution and at protecting marine and coastal ecosystems.

7. The UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system, therefore, provides a unique institutional, regulatory and implementation framework that contributes to achieving the SDG 14 in a regionally coherent manner. With its components and thematic work, the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system provides direct support and guidance to the Contracting Parties for effective and adequate measures to implement the relevant Protocols, meet the Ecological Objectives adopted in 2012 related to pollution and litter, biodiversity and coastal hydrography, and achieve Good Environment Status of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast.

8. In relation to pollution in the Mediterranean, the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system has evolved from the initial stage designed to support Contracting Parties qualify and quantify marine pollution levels, sources and impacts, into an extensive system that supports and guides the Contracting Parties undertake coordinated measures to prevent and abate the marine and coastal areas pollution. The five pollution protocols, the development of strategic action programmes to combat pollution from land- and sea-based sources, the adoption of regional plans with legally-binding measures and timetables on specific sectors and toxic substances, and the National Action Plans, represent a comprehensive set of commitments whose implementation leads to significant reduction of marine pollution in the Mediterranean region. Addressing pollution challenges (including marine litter) has generated important regional commitments on prevention through sustainable consumption and production, thereby also developing a wider and more integrated approach to measures on prevention and reduction of pollution. As an example of concrete impact of its work, the MAP system with its partners supported the environmentally sound disposal of 930 tons PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) from three Mediterranean countries in 2016. Work continues to operationalize new major

interventions in support of countries to complete their inventories of existing POPs and mercury stockpiles and to remove 2000 tons of PCPs/POPs and 30 tons of mercury by 2022.

9. The assessment of pollutant loads reaching directly or indirectly the Mediterranean Sea for the years 2003, 2008 and 2013, indicate a clear and consistent reduction on emission values for key contaminants, such as reduction of polyaromatic hydrocarbons inputs by 98% between 2003 and 2013, reduction of mercury emissions by 94% in the same period, as well as significant reduction of emissions of other heavy metals, including lead, zinc and chrome (81%, 89%, 88% respectively). However, pressures from land-based sources remain high. In particular, waste and wastewater management, energy sector, chemical, mineral industry and production of metals seem to be key sectors to focus attention on, with the view to enhance their environmental performance, and prevent and reduce pollutant loads. As current legislation related to compliance and enforcement focuses on traditional pollution command and control tools, countries should further promote economic instruments for pollution reduction and prevention as an efficient complimentary tool to ensure pollution reduction. Environmental inspection processes should be strengthened. Compliance to permitting requirements should be assessed and requirements enforced.

10. Marine litter is receiving increasing attention in the international agenda, for its very high negative impact on marine and coastal environment, especially in the Mediterranean region. The adoption of the pioneering Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, the first ever legally binding instrument at global level, and its effective implementation represents a model to follow by other regions. This was featured in several major global and regional events, including 2017 G-7 and G-20 meetings and agreements. The Contracting Parties agreed in 2016 to reduce beach litter for 20% by 2024. This goal requires concrete engagement and effective partnerships at all levels.

11. In terms of biodiversity, although the Mediterranean only covers 0.7% of the world's ocean area, it is one of the major reservoirs of marine and coastal biodiversity, with 28% of endemic species and 7.5% of the world's marine fauna and 18% of its marine flora. The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention have committed to monitor and assess the biodiversity component common indicators and to protect or enhance the Mediterranean biodiversity, *inter alia* through designating and managing Specially Protected Areas. In providing assistance to the Contracting Parties to meet their obligations under Articles 4 and 10 of the Barcelona Convention and under the "Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean" (SPA/BD Protocol), and to implement the "Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region" (SAP BIO), several regional strategies and action plans have been developed and adopted, aiming at the protection of threatened or endangered species of flora and fauna, and sustainable management of natural resources. The Contracting Parties have also established the List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) in order to promote cooperation in the management and conservation of natural areas, including in the areas beyond national jurisdiction, as well as in the protection of threatened species and their habitats. Furthermore, the Contracting Parties have also agreed on a Roadmap for a comprehensive coherent network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to achieve Aichi Target 11 in the Mediterranean, which supports the initial Regional Working Programme for the Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Sea including the High Sea.

12. Mediterranean coastal and marine biodiversity is high by all measures. An important characteristic of marine biodiversity of the Mediterranean Sea is the high level of endemism, with 20-30% of the total number of species being native only to the Mediterranean Sea and can reach even 90% for certain groups, such as nesting seabirds. The Mediterranean Sea is also home to important habitats, including seagrass meadows, coralligenous assemblages, sand dunes, coastal wetlands and lagoons. Despite its importance for the marine ecosystems, human health and socioeconomic activities, the Mediterranean biodiversity faces multiple anthropogenic pressures that affect its ecological status and peril its conservation. Impacts have been reported on the populations of different

species, including marine and coastal birds, marine mammals, cartilaginous fishes (several of them in the verge of extinction in the Mediterranean), marine turtles and other species. Some of these species, such as the monk seal, have reached dangerously low population levels and their survival has become questionable unless immediate measures are taken for their conservation. Marine and coastal habitats are also heavily impacted by human activities. As indicated in the 2012 State of the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Environment Report and the 2017 Mediterranean Quality Status Report, major issues requiring more coordinated policy and management responses in order to stem the tide of degradation of the Mediterranean ecosystems include: coastal development and sprawl; chemical contamination; eutrophication; marine litter; marine noise; invasive non-indigenous species; over exploitation of fish stocks; sea-floor integrity; hydrographic conditions; marine food webs; as well as their cumulative effects, exacerbated by climate change and its impacts.

13. A recent evaluation (May 2016) of the status of implementation of the Mediterranean programme for coastal and marine protected areas has shown a significant progress made by the Mediterranean countries during the period 2010-2016. This progress includes the large increase in declarations of MPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). In December 2016, there were 915 sites under national and international declarations. The marine area covered by conservation measures is of about 180,000 km², representing 7.14 % of the Mediterranean Sea surface. Waters off the northern shores and within the western basin of the Mediterranean are better covered compared to other regions. 90.05 % of the total surface covered by MPAs and OECMs are found in EU waters. No-take zones or fully protected areas (where all extractive and destructive activities are forbidden, except as needed for scientific monitoring) cover only 0.04 % of the Mediterranean Sea (976 Km²), much less than the global coverage of 1.4 %.

14. In order to reach global and regional conservation and sustainable use objectives, it is necessary to accelerate the efforts to achieve the Aichi target 11 to effectively and equitably conserve at least 10% of the Mediterranean coastal and marine areas by 2020 and consider increasing thereafter this coverage, notably including the poorly represented open seas, through the SPAMI network, fisheries restricted areas and other OECMs. To do so, it would be key to boost MPA coverage throughout Mediterranean waters, through habitat identification and mapping, increasing the MPA complementarity and representativeness, and creating strong north-south and south-south cooperation opportunities; and to make all necessary efforts to ensure an effective, equitable and efficient management of all MPA sites currently established, also fostering MPA co-management practices with stakeholders as a means to achieve effective and sustainable management and good governance.

Envisioned outcome of the discussion

15. The envisioned outcome of the discussion includes:

- Enhanced commitment to the Barcelona Convention and its instruments, including through ratification and entry into force of its Protocols;
- Enhanced regional cooperation in relation to pollution and biodiversity and in the framework of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025;
- Voluntary commitments to implement the SDG 14 and Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
- Showcasing regional achievements on pollution reduction, including marine litter, and on biodiversity conservation, through Marine Protected Areas, including SPAMIs;
- Development of a Mediterranean narrative and political messages, as inputs for future international and regional processes;
- Renewal of commitments to strengthen implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) and regional commitments, including coordination at the national level and with national instruments implementing relevant global Conventions with particular focus on tools and approaches such as economic instruments and sustainable consumption and production;
- Enhanced inclusion of stakeholders and civil society, including the private sector, in the implementation of Action Plans and other relevant instruments;

- Share best practices and promote solutions, communication, education and public awareness in relation to pollution and biodiversity, as a framework for cooperation with stakeholders;
- Welcoming the GEF-funded MedProgramme, recognizing its importance for the Mediterranean to reduce pollution and protect biodiversity at the national level and strengthen regional governance and cooperation, and inviting other donors to commit to join their efforts so that this initiative fully reaches its designed objectives;
- Coherent implementation in the Mediterranean of global and regional commitments in the field of marine pollution reduction and prevention and in the field of biodiversity conservation and management, especially in relation to vulnerable ecosystems.

Suggested Questions for the Ministers' Statements

16. Ministers are invited to make their interventions around the following questions:
- a) How does the achievement of marine pollution reduction and prevention, and of biodiversity protection and conservation contribute to achieve SDG 14 in the Mediterranean?
 - b) What are your national experiences and good practices that are contributing to the achievement of SDG 14 in the Mediterranean, especially in relation to pollution and biodiversity in the framework of the Barcelona Convention?
 - c) What are the strategic options, priorities and innovative tools, including partnership with the private sector, that the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system should consider in supporting Contracting Parties to achieve SDG 14 and the pollution and biodiversity objectives?