



UNITED  
NATIONS

**EP**

UNEP/MED ECP.35/2



UNITED NATIONS  
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME  
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

UNEP

3 July 2018  
Original: English

35<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Executive Coordination Panel

Paris, France, 6 June 2018

**Report of the Meeting**

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UNEP/MAP  
Athens, 2018

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## **I. Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting**

1. The 35<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Executive Coordination Panel (ECP) was held on 6 June 2018, hosted by Plan Bleu at the premises of the French Ministry of Ecological Transition, in Paris, France. The meeting was chaired by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) Coordinator and attended by the Deputy Coordinator, the Heads of MAP Components and the Programme Officer responsible for governance issues. The Senior Administrative Officer from UNEP Headquarters also attended the meeting.
2. After a welcoming statement by the senior representative of the host Ministry, Mr. Gaetano Leone, UNEP/MAP Coordinator opened the meeting at 09:30 on 6 June 2018. A brief tour-de-table followed for the introduction of participants.

## **II. Agenda item 2: Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work**

3. The meeting reviewed and adopted the Provisional Agenda prepared by the Secretariat, as in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED ECP.34/1. It was decided that, under Any Other Matters, the meeting would address the issues of (a) nomination of MAP Component Focal Points, (b) the need to enhance coordination between projects related to specific issues and the relevant activities funded by MTF and voluntary contributions, and (c) the need to streamline meeting documents.

## **III. Agenda item 3: Follow up to the 34<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting**

### **a) Overview of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Work**

4. The Coordinator presented the priorities for the current period, stressing the importance of partnerships, especially with the private sector, and of increased communication with Contracting Parties, and noting that COP 21 is a milestone for the definition of strategies and priorities for the future of the MAP-Barcelona Convention system.
5. The members of the ECP discussed the priority activities of the current period, such as the 2019 State of the Environment and Development report, the SAP/BIO evaluation and the periodic review of SPAMIs, data and information management, the IMAP information system and the SEIS related indicators, the possible continuation of the SWITCHMED project, marine litter, national and sub-regional contingency plans, offshore exploration and exploitation, the preparation of the Common Regional Framework on ICZM, as well as the development of e-learning tools for outreach and awareness-raising.
6. In relation to the websites of the MAP Components it was noted that, although there are different needs for each Component, there should be an effort to create a MAP-Barcelona Convention system “family feeling” through the websites. To this end, the need was highlighted for INFO/RAC to do an analysis of MAP Components existing websites and to propose a way forward.

### **b) Progress on shared position for strengthening RAC structures**

7. On the issue of finding appropriate ways to address the need for strengthening the structures of the RACs, the Coordinator thanked the MAP Components which had sent their submissions, while it was noted that inputs should be sent by all MAP Components. In the discussion that followed, it was agreed to prepare a consolidated document for the 87<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting, when the necessary financial information will be available. To this end, all MAP Components were requested to provide their inputs in July 2018, so that they can be consolidated by the Secretariat for discussion at the 36<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting, planned to take place in Split, Croatia, in September 2018.

**c) Other pending issues**

8. Following an introduction by the Coordinator, a brief discussion took place on the list of action items included in the report of the 34<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting, most of which were accomplished. Following this discussion, appropriate action items are included in the present document.

	Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
1.	Inputs for the Planning and Priorities Tables of 2018-2019	MAP Components and Coordinating Unit	6 July 2018
2.	Analysis on MAP Components existing websites and way forward	INFO/RAC	September 2018
3.	Inputs on needs for strengthening RAC structures	All RACs	July 2018
4.	Consolidated text on strengthening RAC structures, for discussion at ECP36	CU	September 2018
5.	MAP Components to be reminded of the list of actions from ECP35 report	CU	Timely before ECP36
6.	Concept note on the preparation of the updated UNEP/MAP communication strategy	INFO/RAC	July 2018

**IV. Agenda item 4: Follow up to the 85<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting**

**a) Updates from MAP Components on activities and projects**

9. The Coordinator introduced this agenda item, noting that the Progress Report submitted at the 85<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting was welcomed by the members of the Bureau, who requested, however, that Thematic Focal Points are regularly informed on MAP activities and projects. To this end, MAP Components should establish a regular information mechanism towards respective Focal Points (i.e. through sharing relevant parts of the Planning and Priorities Tables, relevant narrative texts in view of the Bureau meetings, newsletters, etc.).

**b) Development of MoUs**

10. The Coordinator noted that this agenda item addressed the request of the Bureau that the Coordinating Unit should (a) provide legal advice on the process of development and subscription of MoUs relevant for the implementation of POWs, for discussion at the 86<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Bureau, and (b) instruct the MAP Components to involve the relevant Thematic Focal Points in the process of development of MoUs to allow proper contribution and with the view to strengthen cooperation and coordination.

11. The meeting discussed the need of the Coordinating Unit to provide advice on the binding nature of MoUs for the MAP-Barcelona Convention system, if such MoUs are signed between MAP Components and other entities. A discussion followed on the need to consult the content of such MoUs with Thematic Focal Points. It was discussed that this should be done for MoUs that are of a political nature and not of a purely operational nature.

**c) Host Country Agreements**

12. The Coordinator informed the meeting on the relevant conclusion of the 85<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting, while MAP Components presented recent updates in relation to their Host Country Agreement processes.

**d) Meeting of the thematic focal points for Specially Protected Areas/Biological Diversity**

13. The meeting discussed the relevant conclusion of the 85<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting. The Director of SPA/RAC, Mr. Khalil Attia, noted that a consultation among SPA/RAC and the Coordinating Unit will need to take place when the SPA/BD Thematic Focal Point meeting preparations will start, with the aim to clarify what changes and implications this shift will necessitate.

**e) Preparation of COP 21**

14. The Coordinator introduced this agenda item and asked the MAP Components to provide by the end of July information on (a) titles of possible COP 21 draft decisions, and (b) inputs for the main theme of COP 21, so that these could be discussed at the next ECP meeting.

	Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
7.	MAP Components to share relevant parts of Planning and Priorities Tables with respective Thematic Focal Points	MAP Components	Mid-July 2018 (and every 6-months thereafter)
8.	MAP Components to provide information to the CU on MoUs signed during the last 3-4 years	MAP Components	September 2018
9.	Preparation of policy note on which MoUs MAP Components should report on	CU	September 2018
10.	Inputs on (a) titles of possible COP 21 draft decisions, and (b) the main theme of COP 21	MAP Components	End of July 2018

**V. Agenda item 5: Financial issues**

**a) Project Cooperation Agreements**

15. Following a short introduction by the Coordinator, the Senior Administrative Officer from UNEP Headquarters, Ms. Hien Le, explained the situation in relation to the need of Project Cooperation Agreements. More specifically she noted that the new rules require that every payment is supported by a contract which provides legal provisions and adequate details, and that these are not provided by the current Project Documents. Therefore, Project Cooperation Agreements are required even for MAP Components that have Host Country Agreements. She explained that while the detailed Project Cooperation Agreements provide less flexibility, they facilitate the follow-up of the processes.

16. Following discussion, it was agreed to consider and propose to UNEP Headquarters different options to facilitate work, including the possibility to have one Project Document for the whole MAP system – simple and based on the adopted Programme of Work and Budget - and to have Project Cooperation Agreements for each MAP Component to provide the necessary legal provisions / details. It was noted that the process can be expedited if the preparation of the Project Document is initiated before the formal adoption of the Programme of Work and Budget at the COP.

**b) Measures to reduce negative impact of exchange rates**

17. The Senior Administrative Officer from UNEP Headquarters explained that one currency is used in the UN (USD), while the MAP Coordinator noted that all contributions by Contracting Parties are received in Euros (as per the Financial Regulations and Rules and Procedures, Decision IG.21/15) and that reporting to Contracting Parties takes place also in Euros. The Senior Administrative Officer explained that this may need to change. She also noted that the accounting standards of UNEP are

moving to IPSAS, and explained the relevant implications. ECP members asked if more information on this issue can be provided in due time.

18. Several concerns were expressed by the MAP Components on the negative impact of the Euro-USD exchange rates. It was mentioned that project documents note that “as approved by the U.N. Controller, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted Euro as a reference currency for the MTF starting 1 January 2004.” As a consequence, the Programme of Work of UNEP/MAP is approved in Euros. During the discussion, it was noted that the UNEP/MAP Financial Regulations and Rules and Procedures provide for such a loss to be compensated by the working capital reserve. However, it was noted that there is a need to develop the relevant process/procedures, including the approval of the Executive Director of UNEP. Finally, it was also noted that such a compensation would better take place at the end of the year, when the negative impact of exchange rates can be quantified.

### c) Currency used for DSA in MAP meetings

19. On the issue of the currency used for the DSA in MAP meetings, as well as for contracts of consultants, the Senior Administrative Officer from UNEP Headquarters noted that this is at the discretion of MAP Components; however, contracts in UNEP are usually made in USD and the amounts can be received by the contractors in any currency. The same is the case for DSA in meetings, which can be provided to participants in Euros based on the current exchange rate. She also suggested to avoid as much as possible currency conversions, to minimize related risks and losses.

20. Finally, following a relevant question by a MAP Component, it was agreed that substantive travel of staff related to specific activities can be charged to the travel budget of these activities. Following the approval of the new/updated Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) currently in progress, a training will be arranged by the new FMO of the CU for the financial officers of MAP Components.

	Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
11.	Further options developed to facilitate preparation of Project Documents and legal agreements	CU (FMO)	End of 2018
12.	Procedure elaborated to address compensation of exchange rate losses	CU (FMO)	September 2018
13.	Training for the financial officers of MAP Components on the new/updated SOP	CU (FMO)	End of 2018

## VI. Agenda item 6: Partnerships and preparations for bilateral meetings, including with UfMS

21. The Coordinator noted that a bilateral meeting with the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfMS) is planned to take place on 19 July 2018 in Barcelona, Spain. To this end, he asked MAP Components to provide information on joint activities that they have with UfMS, as well as on activities that they plan to do or want to do with UfMS, noting also the added value of such activities for the MAP-Barcelona Convention system. Such inputs should focus on concrete issues related to the implementation of the MoU with UfMS. He highlighted that the meeting in July is a very good opportunity to make the collaboration with UfMS more concrete and focused.

22. The Coordination also noted that a meeting with the FAO/GFCM Secretariat is planned to take place in the first week of October 2018 in Athens, Greece, and that he will come back on this issue once the meeting date is fixed. He also stressed the importance of the involvement of all MAP Components in a possible GEF 7 joint project proposal with GFCM.

	Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
14.	Inputs for (a) the bilateral meeting with UfMS and (b) the Implementation Table of the MoU with UfMS	All MAP Components	6 July 2018

## VII. Agenda item 7: Date and Venue of the 36<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting

23. The next ECP meeting is planned to be held in Split, Croatia, on the last week of September 2018, back-to-back with the Coast Day celebration and the meeting of the Working Group on the Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management. Thus, the ECP meeting will be also linked with the celebration for the 40 years Anniversary of PAP/RAC.

## VIII. Agenda item 8: Any Other Matters

24. The meeting considered other issues raised by its members. In this respect, the following issues were discussed:

25. The Coordinator updated the ECP on the discussion during the 85<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting on the need to enhance coordination between projects related to specific issues and the relevant activities funded by MTF and voluntary contributions. Since the Bureau used the example of Integrated Coastal Zone Management/Marine Spatial Planning, PAP/RAC will prepare a short concept note on how effective coordination of all relevant funding sources is ensured.

26. The issue of nomination of RAC Focal Points was briefly discussed, since RACs often are not able to access their Thematic Focal Points. Furthermore, it was decided to send a reminder to Contracting Parties on the nomination of INFO/RAC Focal Points.

27. Finally, the need to streamline meeting documents was highlighted, which requires efforts from all MAP Components.

28. The meeting was closed by the Coordinator at 18:00 on 6 June 2018.

	Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
15.	Concept note of how coordination of all funding sources in relation to Integrated Coastal Zone Management/Marine Spatial Planning is ensured	PAP/RAC	Mid-September 2018
16.	Reminder to Contracting Parties on the nomination of INFO/RAC Focal Points	CU	June 2018
17.	MAP Components to inform the CU on which Focal Points are not accessible	All MAP Components	July 2018

**Annex I**

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**Annex II**  
**Agenda**

## **Agenda**

- Agenda item 1**            Opening of the Meeting
- Agenda item 2**            Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work
- Agenda item 3**            Follow up to the 34<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting:
- a) Overview of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Work
  - b) Progress on shared position for strengthening RAC structures
  - c) Other pending issues
- Agenda item 4**            Follow up to the 85<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting:
- a) Updates from MAP Components on activities and projects
  - b) Development of MoUs
  - c) Host Country Agreements
  - d) Meeting of the thematic focal points for Specially Protected Areas/Biological Diversity
  - e) Preparation of COP 21
- Agenda item 5**            Financial issues:
- a) Project Cooperation Agreements
  - b) Measures to reduce negative impact of exchange rates
  - c) Currency used for DSA in MAP meetings
- Agenda item 6**            Partnerships and preparations for bilateral meetings, including with UfMS
- Agenda item 7**            Date and Venue of the 36<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting
- Agenda item 8**            Any Other Matters