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Background Note on Themes of the Ministerial Session and Concept Note for the Ministerial Declaration of the 21st Meeting of the Contracting Parties

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Note by the Secretariat

The present document contains background information on the proposed themes of the Ministerial Session and on the preparation of the Ministerial Declaration of the 21st Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 21).

At its 87th Meeting (Athens, Greece, 6-7 November 2018) the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention concluded as follows in relation to the possible themes of COP 21: *“to focus on the strategic guidance for the preparation of the next UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy, considering the global context of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the CBD post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the relevant UNEA resolutions. This theme will also be the basis for the Ministerial Declaration”*.

At its 88th Meeting (Rome, Italy, 21-22 May 2019), the *“Bureau welcome[d] the work of the Secretariat and the Host Country for the preparation of COP 21 and the proposal regarding the theme/s of the Ministerial Session and the preparation of the Ministerial Declaration, and ask[ed] the Secretariat, in consultation with the Host Country, to prepare the final Concept Note on the proposed theme/s and the first main elements of the Ministerial Declaration for submission to the meeting of the MAP Focal Points, where the theme/s will be agreed and the main elements of the Ministerial declaration subsequently discussed”*.

The first part of this document is based on the preliminary Concept Note for the Ministerial Session of COP 21 presented to the Bureau at its 88th Meeting and prepared in consultation with the Host Country of COP 21 and with MAP Components. Updates have been introduced by the Secretariat in the text to reflect recent evolutions.

The second part is a concept note on the Ministerial Declaration, including information on the preparatory process, structure and, as an Annex, main elements of the Naples Ministerial Declaration prepared in consultation with Italy, as Host Country of COP 21.

The document, in addressing these issues, also includes updates from global fora of relevance to the Mediterranean Action Plan system and its future, as requested by Decision IG.23/3 adopted at the 20th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 20) (Tirana, Albania, 17-20 December 2017).

1. Background Note on Themes of the Ministerial Session

A. Background and Process

This concept note introduces the main themes and processes to be addressed by the Ministerial Session of COP 21.

The Ministerial-level discussions will aim to provide political insight to the links between the global processes and the regional evolutions in the Mediterranean, where the MAP-Barcelona Convention system, including its partners, can play a key role in translating the global processes at the regional, national and local levels and promoting and facilitating implementation.

There are currently several processes related to environment and sustainable development that set the global agenda and, to which the regional dimension has a significant contribution. These include mainly, but are not limited to, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, the implementation of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (of particular relevance the 2019 UNFCCC COP 25 “*The Blue COP*” and the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*), the outcome of UNEA-4, focusing on “*Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production*”, and the relevant UNEA resolutions.

It is important to focus on a limited number of priority areas/key issues where the Ministerial-level discussions and the Ministerial Declaration can provide a useful and focused insight and an effective guidance. The priority areas identified include:

- 1) Marine Litter;
- 2) Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Biodiversity;
- 3) Climate Change;
- 4) Blue Economy (with a focus on ICZM/MSP and sustainable tourism).

This Concept Note aim to provide a preliminary and indicative description of each of these priority areas, including background information, the current situation, and the way forward.

Reflections of the Ministerial Session will pave the way for the preparation of the next UNEP/MAP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), including on possible issues to be included in the next MTS. They will also consider conclusions and findings of the 2019 State of the Environment and Development Report.

In relation to the format of the Ministerial-level discussions at COP 21, these would benefit from an interactive format. Depending on the availability of time and resources during the Ministerial Session, specific main themes could be discussed in consecutive sessions, with focused ministerial statements /interventions. Themes can be possibly grouped so that only two sessions are convened in total. Keynote speakers/resource persons, possibly arranged in small panels, could introduce each theme, and each session could be steered by a moderator and rapporteur. The discussion of each theme should involve not only the Ministers/Heads of Delegations but also stakeholders/MAP Partners. Keynote speakers should come from different strands, including UN bodies, academia/science community, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, depending also on the thematic area to be addressed and the focus of the discussions.

A series of events organized around specific activities/achievements of the MAP system and partners in the main thematic areas of the COP with regional and sub-regional scope and other formats of outreach would be arranged throughout the COP, culminating during the Ministerial Session. These would include:

- Roundtables and panel discussions;
- Signing of agreements;
- Announcements of national or sub-regional commitments;
- Launching of reports such as SOED and others;

- Photo exhibitions; and
- Media events.

B. Overview of the Priority Areas to be Addressed

1. Marine Litter

Introduction and Background

Studies on marine litter in the Mediterranean basin were initiated in the 1990's, while attention increased only after 2010, when reliable data and information became available on its abundance and distribution. Later, when trends were assessed, micro plastics entered into the agenda and mapping of impacts became a priority.

The Mediterranean Sea is a closed basin with a coastal population of 210 million inhabitants. It is the first tourist destination in the world, with more than 320 million visitors every year. It receives waste from coastal zones, as well as from many large rivers flowing through urbanized centers. In addition, more than 20% of the global maritime traffic passes through the Mediterranean which also contributes to a great extent to the marine litter problem in the Mediterranean.

Some of the largest amounts of municipal solid waste are found in the Mediterranean Sea. It is estimated that this amount varies from 208 to 760 kg/capita/year. Five trillion particles are afloat around the world oceans, of which 250 billion are found in the Mediterranean. In fact, one of the largest amounts of floating litter was recorded in the Levantine Sea (in the eastern Mediterranean basin) estimated at 64 million items/km², with approximately half billion items lying on the Mediterranean seafloor (nearly 100,000 items/km²).

Consequently, the basin has become one of the most marine litter-affected areas in the world. Plastics are the prevailing type, accounting up to 95-100% of total floating marine litter and more than 50% of seabed marine litter.

The analysis of 33 beaches conducted in 2016, indicated that only 5 types of debris, mostly single-use plastics (cutlery/trays/straws, cigarette butts, caps/lids, plastic bottles and shopping bags) represent more than 60% of marine litter composition. No change was observed in the percentage of the same five marine litter categories between 2013 and 2018 on the beaches of 8 Mediterranean countries. Typically, most of the litter on beaches is originating from beach/ recreational activities, with glass bottles and metal beverage cans having disappeared from the top ten lists in the non-touristic areas over the last years because of behavioral changes.

Current Situation of Marine Litter Governance (Global and Regional)

Nowadays, several global efforts and initiatives are ongoing aiming at actions for reducing and preventing marine litter, plastic pollution and microplastic generation as well as for mitigating its impacts. These include worldwide initiatives, like the United Nations Environment Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML); the Honolulu Strategy; the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals; the CBD post-2020 Biodiversity Framework; the recent fourth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4) with its decisions and resolutions directly and indirectly related to marine litter (Marine plastic litter and microplastics; Addressing single-use plastic products pollution; Innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production; Environmentally sound management of waste; Implementation Plan "*Towards a Pollution-free Planet*" and the Ministerial Declaration launching it at UNEA-3; the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015 and their specific target on pollution in the oceans (Goal 14 and target 14.1); the G7 Action Plan to Combat Marine Litter; the G20 Action Plan on Marine Litter; and several regional action plans.

In the Mediterranean, the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management, adopted in 2013, is the main framework, complemented by the Regional Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production. The

Regional Plan addresses several aspects including monitoring, assessment, concrete measures, financial assistance, capacity building activities, regional collaboration and partnerships. The majority of the measures as provided for in the Regional Plan should be implemented by the Contracting Parties by 2020 with an overall timeframe until 2025.

Specific Challenges and Emerging Issues

In most Mediterranean countries, the root causes of plastic pollution are found in the increase of use of plastics, unsustainable consumption patterns, ineffective/inefficient waste management and loopholes in plastic waste management.

In some areas in the Mediterranean, up to 58% of the collected municipal solid waste is still disposed in open dump sites. Out of the millions of tons of plastic waste produced each year in Mediterranean countries, less than one third is recycled and plastics recycling is less than 6%. Bearing in mind the importance of wastewater as pathway for waste leakage into the sea, a key challenge is that in the Mediterranean region 21% of wastewater (25% in Southern Countries) undergoes only basic treatment, and less than 8%, (1 % in southern countries) is undergoing tertiary treatment. Key economic sectors in the Mediterranean, such as fisheries, tourism and shipping, also generate large amounts of marine litter.

More specific challenges to be addressed in relation to marine litter could include:

- The assessment on the economic impacts of marine litter in the Mediterranean Sea.
- Micro- and nano-plastics and the possible release of associated Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs).
- Measures on microplastics and increased efforts at regional and national levels, with a view to incorporate microplastics into the marine litter agenda for the Contracting Parties which have not yet done so.

Way forward and Future Commitments

Objectives and actions are needed towards the reduction of plastic consumption, supporting eco-design/innovation, resource efficiency and a better management of waste and water, long-term efficient and viable recycling targets for municipal waste and packaging/plastic waste, a greater use of policy instruments and control measures such as bans, incentives, taxes, etc., extended producer responsibility schemes and coordination of policy investments in the waste sector are the most critical drivers to reduce marine litter.

To date, the majority of the Mediterranean countries have made progress towards the effective management of marine litter; however, a brave step ahead could be made including the following regional commitments:

- Upgrading the regulatory framework for reducing single-use plastic bags (for those countries that lack these legislations); progress in adopting Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), including approaches to tackle packaging waste; and relevant policies to further promote, strengthen and to also tackle additional, single-use items, other than the single-use plastic bags.
- Prevention measures and circular economy approaches provided in the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean should be further promoted to pass plastic reduction policies, support industry to minimize plastic packaging and redesign products, and change consumer habits.
- Changes towards a more circular economy were observed in the recent years, but important gaps remain.
- The Mediterranean region may have to face new challenges, such as the increase of plastics production, the use of new materials (bio-plastics, copolymers, etc.) that may not have been produced so as to be environmentally relevant and may mislead consumers. A clear guidance of the available solutions needs to be prepared.

- A better understanding of the links between marine litter fluxes and regional economy is needed; as coordination in establishing and implementing national programmes of measures to maximize transboundary benefits should be continuously addressed at the regional governance level.
- Regional, IMAP-based, marine litter monitoring should become fully operational.
- Policy actions by sub-national authorities, industry-based solution and large-scale green economy initiatives should be strengthened to support the transition towards a more sustainable economy, promoting the transfer of Environmentally Sound Technology to the industry, policy changes and incentives to enable the circular economy, providing innovative and long-term solutions.
- The actions of civil society should be further enhanced and coordinated through the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter. Civil society's role on awareness raising, but also on advocacy and promotion of concrete solutions to marine litter is significant. A region-wide campaign can be developed in all MAP languages.
- Binding quantitative targets to reduce marine litter (e.g. reduce beach marine litter by 20% by 2024), should be established and reached.
- Accounting and cost-recovery mechanisms in most of the countries regarding wastewater and solid waste management are insufficient. Weak enforcement, insufficient waste treatment infrastructures and policies, as well as separate collection, strong regional disparities between urban and rural areas and poor storm water management are still gaps that need to be addressed.
- All coastal cities in the Mediterranean should establish and have fully functional and operational Waste Water Treatment Plants, especially in the southern and eastern Mediterranean. Specific capacity building activities may be needed in this respect.
- Riverine inputs of marine litter should be further addressed, especially the seasonal flush of accumulated marine litter in river streams.
- Informal economy, informal recycling networks around the basin, illegal manufacturing and black markets is a reality in some Mediterranean areas and jeopardizes solutions to marine litter, making even clearer that the waste management schemes at national level need to become more effective and efficient. These informal networks should be taken over by national policies.
- Open dump sites should be closed as a matter of urgency and related enforcement mechanisms should be further strengthened.
- Relevant legislation on port reception facilities still requires efforts to be fully implemented and/or enforced.

2. Marine Protected Areas and Biodiversity

Introduction and Background

Conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity, including the use of marine protected areas, is essential to ensure that the world's oceans, seas and marine resources remain vital for current and future generations. A more effective management of fisheries, which are a global source for food, and an appropriate protection of the marine environment from pollution and its adverse effects, are among the critical actions to be taken. Effective management of terrestrial ecosystems is also critical to minimizing nutrient losses to marine systems and negative land-based impacts on the marine environment and its resources.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, agreed by the 193 States Members of the United Nations, sets out an ambitious framework of universal and indivisible goals and targets. Biodiversity and ecosystems feature prominently across many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated targets. They contribute directly to human well-being and development priorities.

SDG 14 focuses on human interactions with the ocean, seas and marine resources. It is underpinned by targets addressing conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, seas and marine resources including coastal zones, and targets referring to capacity building and ocean governance.

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets adopted under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has been recognized as setting the global framework for priority actions on biodiversity.

For the marine environment, Aichi Target 11¹ represents a call to effectively conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020. Aichi Target 11 relates specifically to the effective conservation of marine areas. It represents a broader, more ambitious marine conservation aspiration than previous global targets.

The riparian countries of the Mediterranean Sea have entrusted the protection of the Mediterranean biodiversity, their species and habitats on an area-based strategy in the form of marine protected areas (MPAs), aligned with the main international conservation Conventions and Agreements. For this aim, a “*Roadmap for a comprehensive coherent network of well managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to achieve Aichi Target 11 in the Mediterranean*” has been adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention at their 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 19) (Athens, Greece, February 2016).

At the 20th Meeting (COP 20) (Tirana, Albania, December 2017), the Contracting Parties committed through the Tirana Ministerial Declaration “*to accelerate efforts to ensure the implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and especially Aichi Target 11, as well as the ocean related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets, in particular SDG target 14.5 in the Mediterranean*”.

Currently, the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) is running an evaluation of the implementation of the Roadmap to achieve Aichi Target 11 in the Mediterranean. The results of this evaluation, along with proposals of post-2020 targets for the region, were presented to the 14th meeting of SPA/BD thematic Focal Points (Portorož, Slovenia, 18-21 June 2019).

Current Status and Main Challenges

To date, around 1,234 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs), covering an area of 226,000 km², as estimated by SPA/RAC through the data gathered, are in place in the Mediterranean Sea.

This means that 8.97% of the total surface of the Mediterranean is under a legal designation status. 1.6% of the Mediterranean is covered by nationally designated sites and 0.04% of the Mediterranean is covered by MPAs no-go, no-take or no-fishing zones.

However, most of the surface covered by MPAs and OECMs, representing 8.27% of the total surface of the Mediterranean, is located in the Western basin and therefore important efforts are required to reach a homogeneous spatial repartition of MPAs for a more comprehensive conservation of species. Furthermore, for most sites, there is little available information on the implementation of management measures and on the effectiveness of such measures towards reaching the site’s conservation targets.

As 2020 approaches, reaching the quantitative target in the Mediterranean seems theoretically feasible, but the qualitative mandatory add-ons have revealed as a hard task to accomplish and are far from being achieved.

An Environmental Fund for Mediterranean MPAs (M2PA) has been launched since 2015 by France, Monaco and Tunisia, and joined until now by Albania, Morocco and Spain, to support sustainable management of Mediterranean MPAs and to contribute to their financial autonomy and territorial integration.

¹ By 2020, at least 17% of terrestrial and inland water, and 10% of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

Way Forward and Future Commitments

The effective implementation of Aichi Target 11 will depend on the effort to create the widest Mediterranean coalition to support this process among States and multilateral/regional organizations. Boosting the qualitative requirements of Aichi Target 11 to advance towards a more effective, robust and equitable network of Mediterranean MPAs, needs the reinforcement of the current structures rather than a dimensional increase.

At the global level, States and the international community have started to build a large and global consensus on the means to timely achieve Aichi Biodiversity Targets and particularly Target 11, by 2020, as well as a new global deal for biodiversity beyond 2020. By 2020, in Beijing, a new international biodiversity framework will be agreed on under the Convention on Biological Diversity at its COP 15.

Governments have the obligation to make commitments to sustainable use of natural resources, by implementing a scientifically-based management, that provides benefits to the local communities as well as contributing to environment conservation and reaching a Good Environment Status. The ecosystem approach is a general initiative meant for larger geographical areas (eco-region), often with complex socio-cultural conditions and relationships between nature and human needs.

It is critically important to be capable of making the shift from policymaking to effective implementation within a realistic timeframe but obeying to the commitment of the countries to the regional/global agreements.

For the Mediterranean, it is time to create the necessary good will and momentum to steer in a different direction to reach long-term structural solutions. A clear share of responsibilities among actors and stakeholders is needed at all levels (global, regional, national and local) and, thus, a form of individualization of targets and responsibilities.

To this end, Contracting Parties could engage in a long process to:

- Adopt additional protection measures including mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into the actions of sectoral strategies and programmes.
- Encourage the UN General Assembly to convene “*High-Level Biodiversity Summits*” at the level of Heads of State/Heads of Government in order to raise the political visibility of biodiversity and its contribution to the Agenda 2030 as a contribution to the development of a robust post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
- Support the development of such a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, through an appropriately harmonized legal tool, built as a Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable management of natural resources in the Mediterranean region.
- Promote cooperation and synergies at global, regional and national levels and best practices as a key part of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
- Support further work on cooperation and synergies (e.g. with biodiversity related Conventions, Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, European Union programmes).
- Support capacity building requirements to address in the future possible gaps identified in the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SAP BIO) implementation.
- Accelerate the declaration and effective management of more MPAs to achieve the 10% goal of Aichi Target 11 in terms of marine surface coverage and connection of the Mediterranean network of MPAs, especially for the Southern and Eastern parts of the Mediterranean, considering the recent agreement on the definition of OECMs by the last CBD COP 14 (Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, 17-29 November 2018).
- Improve the existing Mediterranean MPA network in terms of coverage, representativity, connectivity and management effectiveness.

- Develop, within the above, MPA connectivity measures for the protection of highly mobile migratory species (Cetaceans, turtles, Seabirds), integrating their mobility in order to cover their large home range to allow their good conservation status
- Envisage the declaration of MPAs in the areas embracing the high sea and deep sea including the Mediterranean areas already included in the CBD Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSA) repository.
- Develop mechanisms for exchanging relevant information and for promoting cooperation in relevant thematic issues and interdisciplinary approaches in a range of similar sites listed either as Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Biosphere Reserves, or both synchronously.
- Promote functional no-go, no-take or no-fishing zones to foster their positive effect on ecosystem recovery, essential habitats conservation, and fishery productivity; agree on a quantified target to achieve beyond 2020 in this regard.
- Promote a participatory planning and management of MPAs where all the local socio-economic stakeholders (fishermen, tourism actors, etc.) are involved in the management aspects, inside and outside protected areas.
- Further promote the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) and the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) tools in marine resources management to better consider threats and human impacts of different socio-economic activities on the marine biodiversity and ecosystems in a coordinated manner, making the shift from policymaking to implementation, and thus setting up a form of individualization of targets and management options at the local level.
- Ensure mainstreaming of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services with the on-going work of UNEP on green/blue/circular economy in the different sectoral activities in the marine environment (fishing, energy -including renewable energy, mining, industry, infrastructures, etc.), and on health and pollution as well as sustainable consumption and production/resource efficiency.

3. Climate Change

Introduction and Background

A systemic issue: The Mediterranean Region is recognized as a climate change hot spot. Recent accelerated climate change (including warming, more severe droughts, changing extreme events, sea-level rise and ocean acidification) has exacerbated existing environmental problems in the Mediterranean Basin already caused by the combination of changes in land use, pollution and declining biodiversity.

Warming: In the Mediterranean region, average annual temperatures are now approximately 1.6°C higher than during the preindustrial period, well above current global warming trends (+1.1°C). Without additional mitigation, regional temperature increase will reach 2.2°C in 2040, possibly exceeding 3.8°C in some parts of the region in 2100. Summers will likely warm faster than winters. Warming of the Mediterranean Sea surface is currently estimated at 0.4°C per decade.

Precipitations: A global atmospheric temperature increase of 2°C is expected to be accompanied by a reduction in summer precipitation of about 10-15% in southern France, northwestern Spain and the Balkans and up to 30% in Turkey. The combination of reduced rainfall and warming generates strong trends towards drier conditions.

Extreme events: High temperature events and heat waves are likely to become more frequent and/or more extreme. Heavy rainfall events are likely to intensify by 10-20% in all seasons except for summer.

Sea level rise: Similar to worldwide trends, sea level in the Mediterranean has risen at an accelerating rate: 0.7 mm per year between 1945 and 2000; 1.1 mm per year between 1970 and 2006; and about 3 mm per year during the last two decades. Future projections range from 52 to 190 cm global mean sea level increase by 2100 but are subject to important uncertainties: the accelerating ice loss in Greenland

and Antarctic implies a significant additional risk even if global warming was limited to 1.5°C, with a potential of multi-meter sea level rise.

Acidification: The world's oceans have absorbed about 30% of the CO₂ emitted by human activities. Ocean pH has subsequently decreased by 0.1 pH units since the preindustrial period. Globally, CO₂ uptake by the oceans is expected to lead, by 2100, to acidification of 0.15-0.41 pH units below 1870-1899 levels.

Links with ICZM: Coastal zones are highly coveted for both living and economic activities and thus subject to high pressures. The key challenges are high population density and overbuilding which threaten the most valuable coastal asset - the space – and, as a consequence, coastal and marine ecosystems, the richness of biodiversity, and historic and cultural heritage. To make things worse, the climate change will have greatest impact in the coastal zone, in both its land and marine parts. The land part is densely built and has a high concentration of economic activities, while the coastal sea is home to most of the marine fauna and flora, hosting at the same time many activities, such as aquaculture, fisheries, nautical tourism, bathing, diving/snorkelling, etc.

Current Status and Main Challenges

Climate change, alone or combined with other significant human induced pressures, triggers important risks for ecosystems, human security and well-being. Challenges resulting from these changes concern numerous domains, including safe access to natural resources (water and food), state of ecosystems, human security with respect to natural disasters, etc. Mediterranean ecosystems provide numerous services, including renewable natural, environmental services and social services. However, these ecosystems now face unprecedented challenges, as described below.

Impacts of climate change represent a particular challenge for the coastal zone as they will bring an increase in the extreme weather events, coastal flooding followed by accelerating coastal erosion, sea water contamination and groundwater salinization. Other impacts of climate change, like elevated temperatures and decrease of precipitation, will result in more frequent recurrence of droughts and increasing risk of wildfires, water shortage and consequently food shortage. The riparian Mediterranean countries are increasingly aware of these growing risks in coastal zones and recognize the need for regular monitoring to anticipate the adverse phenomena and to adopt appropriate forms of governance and management in the short, medium and long terms. More specifically:

Fresh water availability in the Mediterranean region is likely to suffer among the largest decreases in the world. The Mediterranean population classified as 'water-poor' is projected to increase from 180 million people in 2013 to over 250 million within 20 years.

Food security: Water scarcity, soil degradation and erosion will also affect agriculture and livestock production. Yields for many winter and spring crops are expected to decrease, especially in the South. Extreme events, such as droughts, heat waves and heavy rainfall may cause unexpected production losses and increase crop yield variability. Dependence of southern Mediterranean countries on imported food (estimated at around 50 % for all food products in the Maghreb) is expected to increase.

Ecosystems: The coupled effect of warming and drought is expected to lead to a general increase in aridity and subsequent desertification of many Mediterranean land ecosystems. Forests, wetlands and coastal ecosystems are also likely to be affected by changes in extreme temperature events and droughts. Drought, heat waves and changed land management will bring longer fire seasons, and potentially more frequent large, severe fires. In the Mediterranean Sea, cold-water species become less abundant or extinct and warm-water species become more abundant, leading to homogenization of the biota. Non-indigenous species enter the Mediterranean mainly from the Red Sea. Water acidification has negative impacts on many pelagic and benthic organisms with calcareous body parts. Increased water temperatures also lead to mass mortality events, in coralligenous, sponges and molluscs, threatening both biodiversity and associated economic sectors (such as tourism, shellfish aquaculture).

Coastal ecosystems are particularly exposed to climate and environmental change, including sea level rise, extreme events, sedimentation decrease, salt intrusion in coastal aquifers and habitats degradation

(e.g., coastal dunes, cliffs or terraces). Coastal wetlands are particularly affected. Construction in coastal regions, sand erosion and instabilities in beaches have destructive effects on fauna and flora and, in particular, on endemic species (e.g. monk seal and loggerhead sea turtle).

Coastal infrastructures and cities: Rising sea levels, storm-surges, flooding, erosion and local land subsidence impact harbors, port cities and other coastal infrastructures, as well as wetlands and beaches around the Mediterranean. About 15 mega cities (port cities with a population greater than 1 million in 2005) are at risk of flooding due to sea level rise, unless further adaptation is undertaken. By 2050, for the lower sea-level rise scenarios and current adaptation measures, cities in the Mediterranean will account for half of the 20 global cities with the highest increase of the average annual damages. The areas at extremely high risk are predominantly located in the southern and eastern Mediterranean region. In North African countries 1 m sea-level rise would impact approximately 41,500 km² of the territory and at least 37 million people.

Cultural heritage: Out of 49 cultural Mediterranean UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHS) located in low-lying coastal areas of the Mediterranean, 37 are at risk from a 100-year flood and 42 from coastal erosion.

Way Forward and Future Commitments

- ICZM has an important role to play, also in relation with two other major United Nations Environment Programme /Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) processes, namely the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) and the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework. With its integrative methods and tools, it offers the most operational management mechanism for implementing and reaching the objectives of both.
- The Mediterranean governance on ICZM is crucial for its success. A combination of elements: the expected adoption of the Common Regional Framework for ICZM, boosting of the UNEP/MAP Information Technology platform, governance mechanisms developed in previous or on-going projects (such as Coastal Area Management Programmes (CAMPs), “*MedPartnership*”, etc.) and the initiative promoted mainly by the recent CAMPs towards the establishment of an official network, can make an important step forward in boosting the regional governance mechanism, improving the implementation of ICZM, and through it, Climate Change Adaptation.
- Policy responses to climate change need to be based on scientific evidence. There is a need to summarize scientific findings in a form easily accessible to regional, national and local decisions makers, including findings on the consequences of environmental change for natural systems, the economy, and human well-being. The network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC) directly contributes to the Flagship Initiative for the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) Objective 4, in particular with the preparation of the first assessment report on the state and risks of climate and environmental changes in the Mediterranean, to be published in early 2020.
- Ensure that scientific findings are recognized at high political level and broadly disseminated, including through the official adoption of the MedECC report.
- Give particular attention to emerging scenarios regarding sea level rise, that – under a precaution principle - call for an acceleration of climate change adaptation in coastal areas.
- Evaluate environmental, economic and social impacts of sea level rise and coastal hazards, associated with climate change in coastal areas.
- Ensure that land use planning and infrastructure – in particular in coastal areas – take full account of relevant climate change scenarios (e.g. 100 years projections) and uncertainties.
- Prefer versatile options in a context of high uncertainty to avoid “*maladaptation*”.
- Facilitate the integration of nature-based solution in adaptation plans to maximize co-benefits.
- Given the critical importance of freshwater resources in the Mediterranean, consider watersheds as a relevant unit to design subnational adaptation plans, with an integrated approach based on all complementary resources (e.g. blue, green and grey waters).
- Develop transdisciplinary research and inter-sectoral policies to tackle highly interconnected issues, in particular through the water-food-energy nexus.

- Involve a range of actors in designing and implementing adaptation strategies, including scientists, private sector representatives from banking and insurance sectors, civil society, etc., building on collaborations beyond institutional and administrative boundaries.
- Mobilize increased international funding, supported by national and sub-national resources mobilized through subsidies' reforms and efficient green tax collection. International support could in particular help increase energy and water efficiency.

4. Blue Economy

(with focus on ICZM/MSP and sustainable tourism)

Introduction and Background

Oceans cover 72% of the surface of our “*blue*” planet and constitute more than 95% of the biosphere. Life originated in the oceans and those continue to support our life by generating oxygen, absorbing carbon dioxide, recycling nutrients and regulating global climate and temperature. Oceans provide a substantial portion of the global population with food and livelihoods and are the means of transport for 80% of global trade.

In the “*Rio +20*” United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20-22 June 2012), the concept and implementation of a “*green economy*” was at the core of the debate. Throughout the preparatory process, however, many coastal countries questioned the applicability of the “*green economy*” to them and presented strong positions for a “*blue economy*” approach, to be more prominently addressed on the assumption that seas and oceans are crucial to move towards sustainable, low-carbon, resource efficient, and inclusive development patterns.

At the global level, the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other related processes such as the Paris Agreement, target the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources (e.g. through SDG 14). Likewise, the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity is fully in line with the preparations for the Post-2020 CBD Biodiversity Framework as a stepping stone towards the 2050 Vision of “*Living in harmony with nature*”.

At the regional level, the Mediterranean Sea has been crucial for the economy of coastal communities and States, since ancient times. Today, traditional (e.g. *aquaculture, fisheries, coastal and maritime tourism, shipping, ship-building/repair, ports*) and emerging maritime economy sectors (e.g. *blue biotechnologies, ship recycling, ocean energy*) show enormous potential for increasing prosperity and growth, a potential inextricably linked to our capacity to apply management practices able to maintain the integrity of marine ecosystems and, as such, the services they provide.

The Mediterranean Sea can be seen as a development space that, if used sustainably, may trigger economic prosperity and contribute to the stability of the region through the creation of jobs and innovative business opportunities in the maritime sectors. This is emphasized in the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD 2016-2025), and particularly in its Objective 1 (Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas) and Objective 5 (Transition towards a green and blue economy). Also, at the regional level in 2015, the 43 countries composing the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), agreed on the need to make the best use of the potential of maritime sectors to promote growth jobs and investments while maintaining our seas healthy.

Land cover and land use in the Mediterranean region continue to change. Urban expansion and industrialization around coastal cities are driven by waterfront development for economic activities, such as tourism and real estate development, marinas, fishing and trading ports, industrial plants that need the proximity of seawater for cooling or for production export (energy, mineral), desalination, etc., with diverse environmental and social impacts.

Current Status and Main Challenges

The built-up part of the Mediterranean coastal belt has increased substantially throughout the last decades, leaving less and less space for natural coastal ecosystems in all Mediterranean countries and increasing coastal risks for the people living in the coastal zone. The largest part of the coastal urbanization in the Mediterranean happened since the 1950's when tourism in its today's form started to rise. Tourism facilities, as well as residential facilities, mostly reach the highest market price when located close to the beach, with the sea view. Therefore, urbanization pressure on the narrow coastal belt, particularly in the low laying coastal areas is the highest. Preventing this type of "*ribbon development*" represents one of the key goals of ICZM. Another key goal is to "*leave the room to the sea*" through establishing the setback zone near the sea where construction will not be allowed.

Mediterranean countries have enhanced their legal and institutional capacity to protect the coastal zones by adopting the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in the Mediterranean (ICZM Protocol). Entered into force in 2011, the ICZM Protocol provides the legal basis for coordinated implementation of integrated coastal and marine management policies. Half of the Contracting Parties have ratified the ICZM Protocol and another six have signed it. By adopting the ICZM Protocol, Mediterranean countries have clearly indicated their willingness to implement system-based approaches, to address interactions among ecological factors and multiple human activities, to reduce cumulative pressures on fragile or sensitive ecosystems. The Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) and Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) have extended the ICZM approach to the sea, thereby enhancing the marine part of the land-sea continuum. To strengthen the coherence of the varied approaches and methods in line with the ICZM Protocol, the Common Regional Framework (CRF) for ICZM is currently under development having as one of the objectives the introduction of MSP as an important tool/process for the implementation of ICZM in the marine part of the coastal zone. This framework should help countries plan and manage maritime activities according to the Ecosystem Approach.

While in the past management focus was on the land part of the coastal zone, the increasing trend of "*maritimisation*" of human activities calls for an increasing effort to control and minimise impacts associated with the expansion and diversification of maritime sectors i.e. to extend the approach and practices of integrated management through MSP. Managing these new pressures, from the sea side, combined with those already existing on the land side require to articulate ICZM with MSP.

The Mediterranean region experiences a wide range of socio-economic and environmental threats. Among the "*driving forces*" behind the current pressures one can include: 1) coastal and maritime tourism, which may lead to water stress and pollution, energy mismanagement, waste generation/marine litter, habitats loss, pressure on endangered species, loss of culture authenticity and native traditions; 2) weak planning of multiple, often competitive, human activities at sea.

The sector of coastal and maritime tourism is a pillar of Mediterranean economies offering employment (11,5 % of the total employment in 2014) and economic growth (11,3% of regional GDP)². Looking at the southern shore of the Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia), the contribution of tourism to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will reach 10.0% by 2027 and 2.8 million jobs³. This huge potential of coastal and maritime tourism can be fully and sustainably harnessed only if Mediterranean countries and their stakeholders build and operationalize governance mechanisms able to ensure dialogue and collaboration among them.

To this end, although there is still a long way to go, several regional or European Union (EU) initiatives put tourism at the core of their action: i) the *Initiative for the Sustainable development of the Blue Economy in the western Mediterranean (West Med Initiative)* which involves the governments of Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia addresses the

² Plan Bleu-UN Environment /MAP Regional Activity Center "*Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean: State of the Play and Strategic Directions*", Paper 17, May 2017.

³ Union for the Mediterranean "*Blue Economy in the Mediterranean*", 2018

challenges and emerging opportunities for sustainable investments and jobs creation, and pursues cooperation; ii) the “*sustainable tourism*” pillar of the *EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)* aims at the diversification of the macro-region’s tourism products and services along with tackling seasonality of inland, coastal and maritime tourism demand, and at improving the quality and innovation of tourism offer and enhancing the sustainable and responsible tourism capacities of the tourism actors across the macro-region; iii) the *BLUEMED Initiative*, a research and innovation initiative for promoting blue economy in the Mediterranean Basin through cooperation and now open also to non-EU Mediterranean countries, places sustainable tourism as a key economic challenge for the Mediterranean region; iv) the EU Interreg Med Programme, through the *BleuTourMed* horizontal project, builds on the experience and lessons learnt from the field (17 modular projects) to propose tools and approaches for a transition towards a more environmentally friendly and inclusive tourism.

Way forward and Future Commitments

Effective integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning in the Mediterranean, in conjunction with sustainable consumption and production approaches, are crucial to promote sustainable and synergic uses of marine and coastal areas and resources. Overall, synergies and efficient experience and information exchange at all levels must be systematically sought (particularly at transboundary level) in order to increase coordination and synergies between “*blue*” institutions and projects. Beyond its huge potential, the Mediterranean blue economy poses sustainability challenges that require institutional and managerial capacity, significant investments in research and innovation, and a regional governance based on true shared responsibility over the marine areas and maritime resources of the Mediterranean Region. Based also on the experience from the implementation of the ICZM Protocol and Action Plan, suggestions on the way forward include:

- An additional effort is needed by the Contracting Parties to reach the objective of the full ratification of the ICZM Protocol. However, the ratification is not an end in itself; Contracting Parties should employ additional efforts for an efficient implementation of the ICZM Protocol provisions;
- Given the proven usefulness of CAMPs and the interest of the countries for this kind of activity, CAMPs and similar ICZM demonstration projects will remain a core instrument for implementation, i.e. the mainstreaming of the ICZM principles and the improvement of the coastal management practice;
- The ever-growing competition for the use of the marine space makes it necessary to adopt a region-wide strategic/policy document on MSP and to design the future CAMP and other ICZM projects in a way to include a strong MSP component and in particular to explore the land and sea interactions;
- ICZM strategies can be an excellent management instrument for reaching sustainability in coastal zones. Therefore, they find their place within or in close relation with the strategies for sustainable development;
- Support Marine Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (Ecosystem-based Approach) through research, experience sharing and trainings on multi-level governance, management of multi-stakeholder processes, and dialogue with civil society;
- Improve the knowledge on the land-sea nexus in order to advocate for better connection between marine traffic (ports) and the main supply chains on land (train and free-way networks), also in the light of the recent New Silk Road development, which is expected to bring large investments in transport infrastructure;
- Include innovative elements of reflection in planning tools such as geo-hazard, being the Mediterranean Sea geologically active.

More specifically related to sustainable tourism, and taking in consideration the above objectives, and the strategic directions and actions already identified in the 2017 Plan Bleu Regional Activity Center (Plan bleu/RAC) Report on sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean, the following key messages are proposed:

- Assessing the impact of marine and coastal tourism at the level of destinations requires the development of a specific indicator framework and means of verification;
- Promoting sustainable marine and coastal tourism calls for the creation of enabling environment for ecotourism in regional and national organizations, addressing the current fragmented planning efforts and lack of cross-sectoral policies;
- Financial incentives for promoting the circular economy and innovative tourism products and services are needed (e.g. attractions out of season, routes to link sea and inland attractions, alternative activities such as pesca-tourism, recreational fishing, underwater heritage, etc.);
- Regional forces must be joined to establish effective dialogue with public and private financial investors (e.g. EU initiative Blue Invest) with the aim of including a set of sustainable principles and targets in their strategies when investing on tourism related projects;
- Strengthen the interface between enterprises-investors-knowledge providers so as to promote the introduction of innovative and low-impact solutions and practices within the current coastal and maritime tourism model;
- Supporting the creation of strengthening or dedicated nautical clusters is a good direction not only to promote the sector's sustainability, competitiveness, innovation and transfer of results but also as a platform for social progress (jobs creation) and inclusion (youth, women);
- Organizing region-wide advocacy work for new public policies enhancing yachting sustainability based on scientific evidence can support the engagement of key policymakers in setting up higher standards in the industry;
- Modernizing marinas through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and clustering initiatives will support the integration of sustainable solutions in the services they offer, taking advantage of new technologies;
- Support countries on the enforcement of relevant tools through the identification of compliance procedures and mechanisms.

2. Concept Note for the Ministerial Declaration of the 21st Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

A. Background and Process

The initial guidance for the preparation of the Ministerial Declaration of the 21st Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 21) (Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019) was provided by the Bureau at its 87th Meeting (Athens, Greece, 6-7 November 2018) which suggested “*to focus on the strategic guidance for the preparation of the next UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy, considering the global context of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the CBD post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the relevant UNEA resolutions. This theme will also be the basis for the Ministerial Declaration*”.

Consequently, a Concept Note was prepared by the Secretariat and was discussed by the Bureau at its 88th Meeting (Rome, Italy, 21-22 May 2019). The Bureau “*welcome[ed] the work of the Secretariat and the Host Country for the preparation of COP 21 and the proposal regarding the theme/s of the Ministerial Session and the preparation of the Ministerial Declaration, and ask[ed] the Secretariat, in consultation with the Host Country, to prepare the final Concept Note on the proposed theme/s and the first main elements of the Ministerial Declaration for submission to the meeting of the MAP Focal Points, where the theme/s will be agreed and the main elements of the Ministerial declaration subsequently discussed.*”.

The present Concept Note considers the global context of relevance and focuses on the four identified themes, namely Marine Litter, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Biodiversity, Climate Change, and Blue Economy (with a focus on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Sustainable Tourism).

The Ministerial Declaration is expected to provide political guidance for the future work of the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP)–Barcelona Convention system in view of the new Medium-Term Strategy (MTS), to reaffirm its central role for the protection of the environment and the sustainable development in the Mediterranean, and highlight its privileged role as a platform for regional cooperation to implement the global environmental agenda.

B. The structure of the main elements of the Ministerial Declaration

The draft elements of the Ministerial Declaration are proposed in three main sections to rationalize its preparation and to efficiently collect inputs from the UNEP/MAP–Barcelona Convention system and Partners, including through an inclusive participatory process, open to stakeholders and civil society. These sections are:

An introductory section, aiming to guide the preambular part of the Declaration, which intends to offer the global and regional background for the future actions to provide a useful and focused insight. This section contains, therefore, references to:

- the global context identified by the Bureau as highly relevant to the theme of the COP 21 (the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the relevant UNEA resolutions);
- other relevant ongoing global and regional processes, including other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs);
- the crucial role of the regional dimension and of the Regional Seas Programme, and the internal context of the UNEP/MAP–Barcelona Convention system, such as main achievements, ongoing processes and components, key information; and

- 2017 MED QSR and 2019 SOED.

A central section (“calls for actions and commitments”) structured around the four priority areas presented at the 88th Bureau meeting. Each subsection is preceded, by some key data and brief remarks about the current situation for each theme/area, followed by several points containing a list of proposed actions/commitments in relation to the calls for action on:

- preventing, reducing and monitoring Marine Litter and its impact;
- strengthening the Marine Protected Areas system in the Mediterranean, and protecting Biodiversity, and implementing the relevant international agreements through cooperation;
- effectively responding to the challenges arising from Climate Change in the Mediterranean Region;
- promoting Blue Economy, with a focus on ICZM/Marine Spatial Planning and Sustainable Tourism.

A conclusive section intends to provide the strategic guidance for the years ahead, considering the four priority areas in an integral way and beyond, to create opportunities and boost the commitment to ensure a sustainable future for the Mediterranean and for the quality of life of future generations. This may include new approaches, and flagship and pilot initiatives. The strategic guidance may refer, therefore, to implementing the following:

- the call for actions and commitments as per the previous section and the proposed approach of the UNEP/MAP–Barcelona Convention system (i.e. inclusive approach, participation of scientific community and youth, scientific oriented decisions);
- key thematic decisions of COP 21;
- crosscutting flagship and pilot initiatives for the protection of the Mediterranean, e.g.: the creation of new international MPAs on a bilateral/multilateral basis, the “*plastic free*” initiative, maximizing the cooperation of UNEP/MAP with UN agencies, and programs or initiatives to achieve common targets and goals.

C. The inclusive participatory process to the Ministerial Declaration

The draft of the Naples Ministerial Declaration will be prepared through a wide participatory process to ensure an inclusive approach and the effective contribution by the stakeholders with a focus on MAP Partners, civil society and the youth. As follow up to the key governance meetings of the UNEP/MAP–Barcelona Convention system, a series of events and initiatives are being organized to collect inputs with a bottom-up approach, culminating at the Ministerial Session of COP 21.

June-July 2019

An online consultation on the potential content and focus of the Ministerial Declaration of COP 21 was launched at the 18th Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (Budva, Montenegro, 11-13 June 2019), to collect inputs on three key questions (priorities for the future of the UNEP/MAP–Barcelona Convention; strategic message/s to be included/addressed in the COP 21 Ministerial Declaration; elements of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development to be further strengthened and mainstreamed into the UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2027).

September 2019

At the MAP Focal Points’ meeting 2019 (10-13 September 2019), a dedicated session/discussion will take place to exchange views among the Contacting Parties, partners and stakeholder, also to agree on the formal process for the preparation of the Ministerial Declaration under the leadership of the Host Country. This process may include the establishment of an open-ended group to develop the draft text of the Declaration. The consultations may continue online to collect further inputs in the preparation of the Declaration.

October-November 2019

Following the MAP Focal Points' Meeting 2019, a “*Regional Stakeholders Consultation Meeting*” is planned to be held in Athens, Greece with financial support from the Host Country to contribute to the development of the Ministerial Declaration as an enlarged platform of debate for the UNEP/MAP Partners and relevant stakeholders.

At the national level, the Host Country is planning to organize consultations with stakeholders with the aim to collect inputs on COP 21 and in particular on the themes and priorities of the Ministerial Declaration: National Italian Conference with representatives from the relevant authorities, stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs); Meeting of the Italian Biosphere Reserves under the UNESCO Man and Biosphere (MAB) Program; Youth event.

The results of these consultations will feed into the work of the Working Group in order to finalize the draft text of the Declaration by mid-November for submission to COP 21.

December 2019

The outcomes of this consultation process will be presented at the High-Level Segment of COP 21, with a debate involving not only the Ministers/Heads of Delegations but also stakeholders/MAP Partners and representatives from youth.

Annex 1

Main elements for the Naples Ministerial Declaration

Main Elements for the Naples Ministerial Declaration
Prepared in Consultation with Italy, as Host Country of the 21st Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 21)

The main elements have been organized in three main sections:

- *An introductory section*, working as preamble to the Ministerial Declaration;
- *A central section*, with the “*calls for actions and commitments*” as per the four priority areas;
- *A conclusive section*, with the “*strategic guidance*” for the years ahead.

INTRODUCTORY SECTION

This section is proposed, initially, to recall:

- the importance of the Mediterranean for the implementation of global strategies and agendas, noting its richness in terms of environmental and cultural diversity;
- the major role of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system, in promoting and facilitating the implementation of the global processes/agenda in the Mediterranean, at the regional, national and local level.

The global processes referred to may include:

- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals;
- the global post-2020 Biodiversity Framework under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity;
- the Paris Agreement, under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, also considering the 2019 IPCC Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere;
- the United Nations Environment Assembly, with particular relevance to its Fourth Session held in Nairobi on 11-15 March 2019 (Resolution 4/7 on “*Marine plastic litter and microplastics*” and Resolution 4/10 on “*Addressing single-use plastic products pollution*”, and the commitment to restore and protect marine and coastal ecosystems by significantly reducing single-use plastic products by 2030)
- the Workshop on the G7 Action Plan to Combat Marine Litter in Synergy with the Regional Seas Conventions, held in Metz, France, 5-6 May 2019;
- the G20 Implementation Framework for Actions on Marine Plastic Litter, adopted on 16 June 2019 in Karuizawa, Japan;
- Pollution-related MEAs and process beyond the 2020 framework of Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).

Furthermore, the preamble could refer to:

- the need to develop a new path together, to establish a New Deal for Nature and People, with a wide inclusive consultation process – as the one related to the Ministerial Declaration of COP 21 – and with the active participation of the scientific community, NGOs, private sector and youth;
- the main achievements and the ongoing processes of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system, and the demand for further reinforcing its governance;
- the need to take concrete action to enhance the level of safeguard of the Mediterranean, as a bridge between civilizations and as a model for environmental protection and cooperation.

The preamble will introduce the two other main sections:

SECTION ON CALL FOR ACTIONS AND COMMITMENTS

This central section will aim to convert the four priority areas (Marine Litter, Marine Protected Areas and Biodiversity, Climate Change, Blue Economy) into actions and commitments, structured in four corresponding subsections.

(Subsection 1/4: Marine litter)

The first subsection may consider the following:

- The Mediterranean Sea is one of the most marine litter-affected areas in the world, where plastics account up to 95-100% of total floating marine litter and more than 50% of seabed marine litter, mostly originating from single-use plastic products, while analyses show that 5 types of debris, mostly single-use plastics, represent more than 60% of the marine litter composition;
- The global ongoing initiatives for reducing and preventing marine litter, plastic pollution and microplastic generation and mitigating its impacts, including the Goal 14 and target 14.1 of the Agenda 2030, are implemented in the Mediterranean through the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management, adopted at the 18th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 18) in 2013, as the main framework, complemented by the Regional Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP).

The call for action and commitment to tackle the marine litter, especially marine plastic litter and single-use plastic products, to reduce and prevent plastic and microplastic pollution, and mitigate its impacts, also with a view to incorporate microplastics into national marine litter agenda, can include references to:

- a) *Reducing the plastic consumption*, by supporting eco-design/innovation, resource efficiency and a better management of waste and water, a greater use of policy instruments and enhanced control measures to eliminate all sources of plastic leakage in the Mediterranean Sea by 2030;
- b) *Upgrading the regulatory framework for reducing single-use plastic products*, progressing in adopting SCP and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and setting quantitative targets (e.g. reduce beach marine litter by 20% by 2024);
- c) *Promoting prevention measures and circular economy approaches* in the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean by supporting long-term efficient and viable recycling targets, the adoption of national plans to progressively achieve a 100% plastic waste collection and recycling, and addressing the private sector to minimize plastic packaging;
- d) *Making the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme-based marine litter monitoring in the Mediterranean fully operational*, and providing an assessment of the economic impacts of marine litter in the Mediterranean Sea;
- e) *Further enhancing and coordinating the actions of civil society*, through the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter, on awareness raising, advocacy and promotion of concrete solutions to significantly reduce marine litter, also through a region-wide campaign.

(Subsection 2/4: MPAs and Biodiversity)

The second subsection, related to the Marine Protected Areas and Biodiversity, may consider the following elements:

- Currently, 8.97% of the surface of the Mediterranean is under a legal designation status, 1.6% and 0.04 % is covered by nationally designated sites and by Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) no-go, no-take or no-fishing zones; however, efforts are still required to reach a homogeneous spatial distribution of MPAs in the Mediterranean Basin for a more comprehensive conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity;
- The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets and, namely, Target 11 and its call to effectively conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020, requiring critical actions to be taken the evaluation of the implementation of the Roadmap to achieve it adopted by COP 19 in 2016.

Therefore, by reaffirming the commitment toward the sustainable use of natural resources and the need to implement a scientifically based management, the call is proposed to focus on:

- a) *Clearly sharing responsibilities and targets* among actors and stakeholders at global, regional, national and local level, to reach long-term structural solutions, with a view at adopting additional protection measures and mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into the actions of existing sectoral strategies and programmes;
- b) *Supporting the development of a Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme* for the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable management of natural resources in the Mediterranean, and fostering synergies with biodiversity-related Conventions, GEF projects, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and especially the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, and EU programmes and projects, with a view to strengthen capacity building;
- c) *Accelerating the declaration and effective management of MPAs to achieve the Aichi Target 11*, enlarging coverage, representativity, connectivity and management effectiveness of the existing Mediterranean MPAs network, and enhancing a science-policy interface to increase works on habitats and ecosystem components;
- d) *Developing mechanisms for exchanging relevant information and promoting cooperation* in relevant thematic issues and interdisciplinary approaches in the sites listed either as SPAMIs, MPAs including UNESCO Biosphere Reserves;
- e) *Promoting a participatory planning and management of MPAs* where all the local socio-economic stakeholders, including the fishermen and the tourism actors, are to be involved in the management.

(Subsection 3/4: Climate Change)

The third subsection, related to the climate change, may consider that:

- The Mediterranean is recognized as a climate change hot spot, with average annual temperatures already above the current global warming trends (+1.1°C), with frequent and extreme rainfall, with sea level rising at an accelerating rate and where the adverse effects of climate change – including warming, more severe droughts, changing extreme events, sea-level rise and ocean acidification – exacerbated the existing environmental and social problems;
- Climate change, alone or combined with other significant human induced pressures, triggers important risks for ecosystems, human security and well-being, threatening our coastal and marine ecosystems, the richness of biodiversity, the fresh water availability of the region, the food security and our coastal infrastructures and cities, as well as historic and cultural heritage.
- Reference to the upcoming IPCC Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere.

These processes require a successful Mediterranean governance, and policy responses to climate change based on scientific evidence; therefore, the call for action and commitment may include:

- a) *Strengthening Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)* and its role, in relation both to the UNEP/MAP major processes, namely the Ecosystem Approach and the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework and to the ecosystem-based mitigation and adaptation measures adopted in national policies and plans on climate change;
- b) *Building this process upon governance mechanisms already developed in previous or on-going activities*, including the Coastal Area Management Programmes and “*MedPartnership*”;
- c) *Collecting scientific findings in a form easily accessible to regional, national and local decision-makers*, including findings on the consequences of environmental change for natural systems, the economy, and human well-being, *and developing transdisciplinary research and inter-sectoral policies* to tackle interconnected issues, particularly in the water-food-energy nexus;
- d) *Evaluating environmental, economic and social impacts of sea level rise and coastal hazards, associated with climate change* in coastal areas, with a view to ensure that land use planning and infrastructure take full account of relevant climate change scenarios and uncertainties;
- e) *Involving a range of actors in designing and implementing adaptation strategies*, including the scientific community, private sector and civil society, and mobilizing funding also with national and sub-national resources through subsidies’ reforms and efficient green tax collection.

(Subsection 4/4: Blue economy)

The fourth subsection, related to blue economy with a focus on ICZM and sustainable tourism, may consider that:

- The increasing competition for the use of marine space and resources in the Mediterranean calls for an increasing effort to control and minimize the impacts associated with the expansion and diversification of maritime sectors, to maintain the integrity of marine ecosystems and its services, in the existing regional tools for sea and coastal planning and management;
- The Mediterranean can represent a development space that may trigger economic prosperity and contribute to the stability of the Region through the creation of jobs and innovative business opportunities consistent with the circular economy approach, in traditional sectors (such as aquaculture, fisheries, coastal and maritime tourism, shipping, ports) and in emerging maritime economy sectors (such as blue biotechnologies, ocean energy and other marine renewable sources).

By recalling the role of effective ICZM and MSP, and its equivalent mechanisms in the Mediterranean, in conjunction with sustainable consumption and production approaches, the call for action and commitment may focus on:

- a) *Promoting sustainable and synergic uses of marine and coastal areas and resources*, together with the sharing of experiences and information at all levels to increase coordination and synergies between “blue” institutions and projects, and to improve research and innovation;
- b) *Implementing the ICZM Protocol*, increasing its ratifications and the overall initiatives promoted by the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, including the MSP Conceptual Framework and the ICZM Common Regional Framework and Action Plan;
- c) *Ensuring an efficient implementation of the ICZM provisions*, also by mainstreaming the coastal management practices and projects, through research, experience sharing and trainings on multi-level governance, management of multi-stakeholder processes, and dialogue with civil society;
- d) *Developing a specific indicators framework*, e.g. for assessing the impact of marine and coastal tourism on destinations and for promoting the creation of an enabling environment for ecotourism;
- e) *Promoting circular economy and innovative tourism products and services*, including attractions out of season, routes to link sea and inland attractions.

SECTION ON GUIDANCE

Within the strategic and political guidance, this conclusive section is proposed to remark:

- the unique role of the UNEP/MAP - Barcelona Convention system, as the regional privileged platform for cooperation for international funding and donors, multilateral projects, and capacity building;
- the need to use and share environmental data, also with tools of dissemination and communication targeted according to the different contexts;
- the need to engage civil society, citizens, indigenous peoples and local communities, private sector, scientific institutions and academia, and all the relevant stakeholders, through an overall inclusive approach, also enabling the younger generation to directly participate in decisions affecting our common future.

Concerning the key Draft Decisions to be adopted at COP 21, the strategical directions may refer to the implementation of:

- a) the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD);
- b) the ICZM Protocol, through the Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management and the Conceptual Framework for Marine Spatial Planning;
- c) The mandate to develop Regional Plans to reduce and prevent marine pollution from land-based sources and to update and revise SAP BIO;

- d) the setting of new Marine Litter Guidelines, with a view of, *inter alia*, phasing out single-use plastic bags and products;
- e) the Roadmap for the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea Area as Emission Control Area for Sulphur dioxide (ECA), with adequate supporting measures for the maritime companies of the Contracting Parties and a comprehensive proposal to submit to the International Maritime Organization (IMO);
- f) Biodiversity-related draft decisions addressing IMAP implementation and promoting Marine Protected Areas and SPAMI.

Crosscutting flagship and pilot initiatives considered as strategical trends for the protection of the environment of the Mediterranean region may include:

- a) the creation of new international MPAs also on a bilateral/multilateral basis;
- b) the strengthening of the cooperation of UNEP/MAP in common area with other UN programs or initiatives, such as the UNESCO/MAB Programme, the UN Regional Commissions (UN-ECA, UN-ECE, UN-ESCWA, as recommended by the MCSD) and the GFCM.