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Athens, Greece, 9 September 2019

Agenda Item 3: State of Play of Implementation of Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP)

Update on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap

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Note by the Secretariat

The present report prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with MAP components, provides information on the status of implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap, adopted by the 15th meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 15) through Decision IG. 17/6, as well as of the Ecosystem approach-related Decisions adopted respectively by COP 17, 18, 19 and 20.

More specifically, it provides information on the status of implementation of each of the seven steps of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap, with more detailed description of activities executed during the 2018-2019 biennium and their results. The indication on the status of implementation is supported by a general analysis of the main activities and achievements marked under each step since its adoption (period 2008 – 2019).

The current report is an updated version of the report submitted to the 2017 Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Group on the implementation of Ecosystem Approach Roadmap. The updated information is presented in bold for easy of reference.

Review of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap implementation (COP15 Decision IG. 17/6) and the Ecosystem Approach related Decisions of COP 17, 18, 19 and 20 (Decisions IG.20/4, IG.21/3, IG.22/7 and IG.23/6)

Ecosystem Approach Roadmap Steps	Status
I. Definition of an ecological vision for the Mediterranean	Completed
<p>1. With regards to the implementation of the first step of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap, the 15th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in 2008 (COP15) agreed on the following ecological vision for the Mediterranean in its Decision IG.17/6:</p> <p><i>“A healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse for the benefit of present and future generations”</i></p>	
II. Setting of common Mediterranean strategic goals	Completed
<p>2. COP15 also agreed upon a set of strategic goals for marine and coastal areas, with its Decision IG.17/6, as follows:</p> <p>a) <i>To protect, allow recovery and, where practicable, restore the structure and function of marine and coastal ecosystems thus also protecting biodiversity, in order to achieve and maintain good ecological status and allow for their sustainable use.</i></p> <p>b) <i>To reduce pollution in the marine and coastal environment so as to minimize impacts on and risks to human and/or ecosystem health and/or uses of the sea and the coasts.</i></p> <p>c) <i>To prevent, reduce and manage the vulnerability of the sea and the coasts to risks induced by human activities and natural events;</i></p>	
III. Identification of important ecosystem properties and assessment of ecological status and pressures	Completed
<p>3. A number of assessment products have been prepared by the Secretariat since the adoption of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap, with the contribution of Contracting Parties, all MAP Components, relevant partners and regional stakeholders, with the view to provide a clearer image of the state of environment in the Mediterranean and define the main pressures and their sources. More in particular:</p> <p>4. The Initial Integrated Assessment of the Mediterranean Sea and Coastal Areas was prepared in 2011, based on available knowledge and information. This initial assessment was undertaken at sub-regional and regional levels. A summary for decision makers, providing the main findings and priorities was submitted and endorsed by the COP17 with its Decision IG. 20/4.</p> <p>5. The State of the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Environment Report (SoER MED 2012) was prepared and published in 2012. It provides valuable information on the main human induced pressures, the state and impacts on the Mediterranean Ecosystems, while its last part presents the regional regulatory framework and identifies gaps and key steps for the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach. Furthermore, a methodology was developed to assess cost benefit and ecosystem services. The Initial Assessment report included a chapter on socio economic aspects.</p> <p>6. The UNEP/MAP system delivered during the last biennium 2016-2017, the first ever Quality Status Report for the Mediterranean (2017 MED QSR, https://www.medqsr.org/). The MED 2017 QSR was delivered as an assessment product of IMAP based on region-wide Ecological Objectives</p>	

and Common Indicators that was built upon existing data and complemented with inputs from numerous diverse sources.

7. The preparation of QSR 2017 has followed a multi-step comprehensive review process, which has involved all relevant MAP Components, the CORMON experts, MAP Component Focal Points and Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group. Key partners such as the GFCM and ACCOBAMS have also contributed to this process.

8. The **MED QSR 2017 was endorsed by Decision 22/6 on the 2017 MED QSR of COP 20** and is presented as an online interactive report, complemented by an executive summary and policy recommendations.

9. In line with the 6-year ecosystem approach cycle and the IMAP implementation timeline, the next QSR will be delivered in 2023.

10. In line with the findings of the 2017 MED QSR and Decision IG.23/6, as well as the recommendations of the IMAP Best Practices Meeting laid out in UNEP/MED WG.450/3, the Secretariat has prepared the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap and Needs Assessment. It provides for a vision of a better integrated and DPSIR-based GES assessment of the 2023 MED QSR along with a short list of key priority needs, main processes and milestones and related outputs. The 87th Meeting of the Bureau considered and welcomed the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap and Needs Assessment that was thereafter presented to members of the EcAp Coordination Group for written consultation, and consequently concluded by the end of 2018, as requested by COP 20. This document was also consulted with CORMON and EcAp Coordination Groups and their respective meetings. The Roadmap details the main processes and milestones and the related outputs and timelines for timely delivering the 2023 MED QSR in line with decision IG23/6. The respective outputs are integrated into the proposed Programme of Work for 2020-2021.

IV. Development of a set of ecological objectives corresponding to the vision and strategic goals

Completed

11. COP17 adopted a set of 11 Ecological Objectives based on Article 18 of the Barcelona Convention and in line with the agreed ecological vision and strategic goals for the Mediterranean under the ecosystem approach (Decision IG. 20/4).

12. The 11 Ecological Objectives are the following:
EO 1. Biodiversity, EO 2. Non-indigenous species, EO 3. Harvest of commercially exploited fish and shellfish, EO 4. Marine food webs, EO 5. Eutrophication, EO 6. Sea-floor integrity, EO 7. Hydrography, EO 8. Coastal ecosystems and landscapes. EO 9. Pollution, EO 10. Marine litter, EO 11. Energy including underwater noise.

13. The development and negotiation of these ecological objectives were based on the initial assessment report.

V. Derivation of operational objectives with indicators and target levels

Completed

14. As indicated above, COP 17 adopted 11 Ecological Objectives. For each Ecological Objective a set of Operational Objectives and indicators were also adopted on that occasion (IG. 20/4). The purpose was to break down and complement the ecological objectives to support their achievement, guide monitoring and assessment and as such the progress towards Good Environmental Status (GES).

15. Although COP 17 (Decision IG.20/4) adopted indicators for all the operational objectives, it was decided to focus, during the initial phase of Ecosystem Approach Roadmap implementation, on those ecological objectives for which data availability and methodological advancements would allow their effective monitoring. Therefore, COP18, on the basis of article 18 of the Barcelona Convention and relevant provisions from its related Protocols, adopted an integrated list of Mediterranean Good Environmental Status definitions and related targets.

16. The integrated list of GES definitions and related targets as presented in Decision IG.21/3 covers the following Ecological Objectives: a) Biodiversity (Operational Objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4), EO 2 on NIS (Operational Objectives 2.1, 2.2), EO 5 on Eutrophication (Operational Objectives 5.1, 5.2, 5.3), EO 7 on Hydrography (Operational Objectives 7.1, 7.2, 7.3), EO 8 on Coastal Ecosystems and Landscapes (Operational Objective 8.1), EO 9 on Pollution (Operational Objectives 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5) and EO 10 on Marine Litter (Operational Objectives 10.1, 10.2).

17. The Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) per each cluster and the Correspondence Group on GES and Targets (CORGEST) groups, with the overall guidance of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group and with technical support of the Secretariat and the MAP components, concluded a list of IMAP Common and Candidate Indicators covering most of the Ecological Objectives (with the exception of EO 4 and EO 6 for which conditions were not mature enough to ensure monitoring feasibility) with the aim to serve as the basis for the integrated monitoring and assessment at regional and national levels.

18. The list of IMAP indicators was adopted by COP 19 (Decision IG.22/7).

VI. Revision of existing monitoring programmes for ongoing assessment and regular updating of targets

Completed at regional level;
Ongoing at national/subregional level

19. COP19 adopted the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and related Assessment Criteria (IMAP, Decision IG.22/7). The IMAP implementation covers the period from 2016 to 2021.

20. IMAP sets out all the required elements to establish the first region-wide Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme, covering in an integrated manner monitoring and assessment of biodiversity and fisheries, pollution and marine litter, coast and hydrography, based on region-wide common indicators.

21. The core of IMAP is the 23 regionally-agreed common indicators and the 4 candidate indicators, for which scientific knowledge and information is not yet fully developed to allow for regional monitoring and assessment. In any case, Contracting Parties are encouraged to develop pilot monitoring programmes.

22. Overall the IMAP indicators cover 9 out of 11 Ecological Objectives, namely the EO 1, EO 2, EO 3, EO 5, EO 7, EO 8, EO 9, EO 10, EO 11.

23. IMAP provides the basis for the development of candidate indicators towards common indicators, based on outcomes of pilot monitoring activities, additional expert knowledge and scientific development. It also foresees the refinement of specifics of agreed common indicators, in particular on geographical scales.

24. During the initial phase of IMAP (2016-2019) the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention **were** expected to update their national monitoring and assessment programmes in line with IMAP structure and principles and based on the agreed common indicators.

- 25.** In the framework of the MAP Programme of Work and with the support of the EcAp-MED II project and GEF Adriatic project, work is ongoing to **finalize and/or** update **the** national monitoring programmes to implement IMAP on Pollution and Marine Litter; Biodiversity and NIS and Coast and Hydrography Clusters.
- 26.** Technical and financial support was provided to Albania, Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, State of Libya and Tunisia in updating/developing their national monitoring programmes based on IMAP.
- 27.** SPA/RAC has supported several Contracting Parties (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia), through the EU funded EcAp-MED II project, to develop national IMAPs on Biodiversity and NIS. The adopted national IMAPs are available on the SPA/RAC website (http://www.rac-spa.org/fr/ecapmed_ii).
- 28.** PAP/RAC is supporting the Contracting Parties to progress on monitoring and assessment programmes (national IMAPs) for Coast and Hydrography indicators. To date, the development of national IMAPs with regards to EO7 Hydrography and EO8 Coastal Ecosystems and landscapes, through EcAp Med II Project is finalized in Algeria, Israel, Lebanon, State of Libya, Morocco and Tunisia and is ongoing for Albania and Montenegro.
- 29.** MED POL has supported the preparation and/or the update and implementation of national IMAPs with regard to EO5, EO9 and EO10 for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Montenegro, State of Libya, Morocco and Turkey.
- 30.** Furthermore, in accordance with the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work for 2016-2017 and 2018-2019, SPA/RAC supported the Contracting Parties in implementing monitoring programmes on Biodiversity and NIS through pilot activities in the relevant selected monitoring sites (MPAs and high-pressure areas).
- 31.** During the period 2016-2018, MED POL database was updated with new datasets related to eutrophication, Egypt (2012, 2015), France (2013-2016), Israel (2013, 2015, 2017), Montenegro (2016-2017), Morocco (2013-2015), Tunisia (2015), Turkey (2014-2015)] and contaminants, France (2015-2016), Israel (2015, 2017), Montenegro (2016-2018), Morocco (2016-2018), Slovenia (2016) and Turkey (2014 -2015).
- 32.** With the view to promoting integrated GES assessment, a document addressing several cross-cutting issues including assessment criteria and scale of assessments, was presented to the Regional Meeting on IMAP Implementation: Best Practices, Gaps and Common Challenges (Rome, Italy, 10-12 July 2018) hereinafter referred to as IMAP Best Practices Regional Meeting. As a follow up, an initial proposal was prepared by MED POL for consideration of the scales of monitoring along with the scales of assessment as a condition to define the adequate nested approach of the monitoring units into assessment scales for IMAP Common Indicators. This document aims to present concrete guidance and propose the steps forward in the selection of the scales of monitoring and assessment under IMAP in relation to current practices.
- 33.** The IMAP Pilot Info System, developed as deliverable of EcAp MED II project, is ready, fully operational and able to collect data from 1st July 2019. It was developed by INFO/RAC in close consultation with UNEP/MAP Components and presented for the first time during COP 20 (Tirana, Albania, 17-20 December 2017). The IMAP Pilot Info System is able to collect data according to the proposed Data Standards and Data Dictionaries (DDs and DSs) that set the basic information on data reporting within IMAP, for 11 Common Indicators (1, 2, 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22 and 23).
- 34.** The testing phase of the IMAP Pilot Info System has been realized with the voluntary participation of the interested countries, who have been invited to start providing data flow for the selected Common Indicators supported by the Pilot Info System. Nevertheless, it is ready to allow

further testing by all the interested countries also after the conclusion of the project to implement the EcAp roadmap. In addition to this, and with respect to data sharing, work is ongoing to establish a specific cooperation with GFCM with the view to primarily support data and information sharing in relation to the development of the 2023 QSR and IMAP implementation. This partnership will facilitate the inclusion of data and information from Fishery associated Common Indicators into the IMAP Info system. Terms of Reference for a bilateral agreement have been drafted together with a draft Roadmap to facilitate close cooperation with GFCM. Both aim to provide a framework for the strengthening of the knowledge base to safeguard the marine environment and threatened species which result from fishing activities in the Mediterranean Region; Improvement in their capacities for managing and sharing environmental data and information specifically related to the fishery sector; Promotion of data and information exchanges and sharing of the cooperation results as may be considered appropriate; and in particular the sharing of common data sets relevant for the implementation of IMAP Common Indicators of Ecological Objective 3.

35. The IMAP Pilot Info System website (<http://imappilot.info-rac.org/>) is accessible to the general public. Login for Contracting Parties (CPs) and MAP users is needed to access the reserved sections. Full support is provided to all users interested to test its functionalities and want to upload available data sets. An IMAP Pilot Info System User Guide (<http://www.info-rac.org/en/infomap-system/imap-pilot-user-guide-1.docx>) has been developed to provide general assistance to users and a dedicated e-mail account has been set up (imap@info-rac.org) to support CPs during the data upload.

36. INFO/RAC developed Data Standards (DSs) and Data Dictionaries (DDs) for 11 selected IMAP Common Indicators in Excel file spreadsheets format. Namely, Common Indicators: 1, 2, 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22 and 23, were selected with the aim to cover all clusters of IMAP (Biodiversity and NIS, Pollution and Litter, Coast and Hydrography). Based on the initial discussion during the IMAP Best Practices Regional Meeting, DSs and DDs have been further discussed by Contracting Parties in the 5 CORMON Meetings of all clusters, as well as 14th Meeting of MED POL Focal Points and the 14th Meeting of SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points held in 2019. They have been finalized after agreement at the CORMON meetings, and additional work has been carried out to align the system with the changes and to implement the corresponding data flows.

37. According to Specific Objective 19 of the Regional Strategy for the Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2016-2021), the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention have agreed to contribute to the development of a quality assurance programme for data reporting and collection in line with IMAP.

38. Science-Policy Interface workshops (SPI workshops) have been organized by Plan Bleu and have contributed to IMAP implementation with the overall aim to enhance interaction across scientists and between them and policy-makers (practitioners and the ones who develop marine policies) on the ecosystem approach implementation, with focus on the specific IMAP requirements.

39. Five SPI workshops took place from 2015 to 2017 (Inception Meeting, Pollution SPI workshop, Biodiversity SPI workshop, Integrated SPI workshop on the Risk-based Approach and SPI workshop on temporal and geographical scales of Monitoring and Assessment) and allowed scientists and policy makers working on Policy needs and Science gaps.

40. Two crucial publications on Science Policy Interface have been drafted (in 2018 and 2019) to provide recommendations for IMAP clusters:

- 3 Brochures: *“Science-Policy Interface (SPI) to support monitoring implementation plans as well as sub-regional and regional policy developments regarding EcAp clusters on pollution, contaminants & eutrophication, marine biodiversity & fisheries, coast & hydrography”*.
- Technical report: *“Strengthen, structure and sustain a Science Policy Interface (SPI) for IMAP implementation in the Mediterranean”*.

VII. Development and review of relevant action plans and programmes**Ongoing**

41. The implementation of the final step of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap is looked at on a multi-layer perspective, covering all the aspects of the legal and policy framework of the UNEP/MAP- Barcelona Convention. In a nutshell, the ecosystem approach has been raised by the Contracting Parties to the programmatic level, reaffirmed as an overarching principle of the Barcelona Convention and as such has been integrated into the legal and policy framework of the Barcelona Convention including legally and non-legally binding instruments. More specifically:

A. Programmatic level

42. The ecosystem approach has been repeatedly affirmed as an overarching principle of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention. Firstly, the Decision IG.19/17, adopted by COP 16 (Marrakesh, Morocco, November 2009), provides that *“the holistic ecosystem approach will be an overarching principle of the Five-Year Programme of Work”*. Furthermore, ecosystem approach has been recognized by COP 18 as an overarching principle of the Barcelona Convention – MAP Integrated Assessment Policy. Finally, the Athens Declaration, adopted by COP 19, reaffirms *“the application of the ecosystem approach as an overarching principle to achieve the Mediterranean Ecological Objectives and related targets towards good environmental status of the Mediterranean and to contribute to sustainable development”*.

43. Furthermore, the UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021 (Decision IG. 22/1, MTS) and the Programme of Work and Budget 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 fully integrate the ecosystem approach and its vision, as well as the specific steps of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap.

B. Streamlining ecosystem approach and GES targets to the regulatory and policy instruments at regional level

44. During the last years, the legal and policy framework of the Barcelona Convention has been significantly strengthened, with the adoption of new or updated regional plans and programmes, providing for measures to support the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols, based on the article 4 of the Barcelona Convention and respective articles of its Protocols. Since the recognition of ecosystem approach as an overarching principle of UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention, these regional instruments have been developed in an integrated manner, aiming at streamlining the Good Environmental Status in their implementation.

45. The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (Decision IG.22/2, COP 19), is a concrete example of the strong linkages between the environmental pillar of sustainable development and GES/ecosystem approach.

46. The thematic regional policy and regulatory instruments developed or updated since 2008 that take into account ecosystem approach and relevant GES targets include the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean (see Decision IG.21/7, COP 18), Species and Habitats Actions Plans in the framework of the SPA/BD Protocol (see Decision IG.21/4, COP 18, Decision IG.22/12, COP 19), the Action Plan for the implementation of the ICZM Protocol for the Mediterranean (2012-2019) (Decision IG.20/2, COP 17), the Action Plan for the implementation of the Offshore Protocol (Decision IG.22/3, COP 19), the Regional Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2016-2021) (Decision IG. 22/4, COP 19), the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean (Decision IG.22/05, COP 19), the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (Decision IG.22/6, COP 19), the Roadmap for a Comprehensive Coherent Network of Well-Managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to Achieve Aichi Target 11 in the Mediterranean (Decision IG 22/13) and the List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI List, Decision IG 22/14).

47. The Common Regional Framework (CRF) on ICZM was prepared by PAP/RAC in consultation with the Contracting Parties as a strategic instrument meant to facilitate the implementation of the ICZM Protocol. It provides methodological guidance aiming to support the implementation of the ICZM Protocol towards the achievement of EcAp Ecological Objectives (EO) and GES, in a coordinated and integrated manner with the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention System (thus considering the other Protocols and related key documents), and in light of the relevant international instruments.

48. The proposed methodological guidance is based on three major phases that will allow to achieve GES:

- **Phase A** - Elaboration of a matrix of interactions between the EcAp EOs and the economic activities and natural and cultural elements that have great relevance for the coastal areas, according to the content of the ICZM Protocol (hereafter briefly called “elements of the ICZM Protocol”);
- **Phase B** - Detailed analysis of the provisions of the main relevant documents part of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention System related to key interactions between EcAp EOs and ICZM elements. The analysis is performed by clusters of EOs: 1. Biodiversity, 2. Fisheries, 3. Coast and Hydrography, 4. Pollution and Litter; and
- **Phase C** –Identification of operational recommendations to implement the CRF on ICZM with the aim of contributing to the achievement of EcAp Eos and GES, coherently with other instruments of the Barcelona Convention System.

49. During the current biennium, the Secretariat, in coordination with relevant MAP Components, undertook a review of the status of implementation of the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan which was presented to the Second Meeting of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (OFOG) Sub-Group on Environmental Impact (Athens, Greece, 27-28 June 2019). The meeting acknowledged the progress achieved so far and recommended that recent developments under the MAP Barcelona Convention, especially on the Ecosystem Approach and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), should be taken into account by the Contracting Parties, with support from the Secretariat, in the course of the implementation of the Action Plan.

C. State of play of existing regional measures and their contribution to GES: Potential new/updated measures

50. The Secretariat has worked to assess the existing regional measures and identify potential new/updated measures to achieve GES.

51. An Initial Ecosystem Approach Gap Analysis was prepared in 2013, with a focus on the existing regional legal framework to achieve GES. During the 2016-2017 biennium, the Secretariat undertook a deeper analysis of the regional measures taking into consideration the pressures, GES and related targets.

52. The regional measures were therefore assessed in relation to the key pressures on the marine and coastal environment of the Mediterranean and main gaps in achieving/maintaining GES were identified. On the basis of this analysis and taking into account other available regional analyses and reports, areas were identified where measures are efficient but require strengthened implementation, and others where new/updated measures should be considered in order to bridge the gaps between GES and the current situation.

53. A proposed list of new/updated potential measures has been developed for further consideration by the Contracting Parties on the way forward for the period 2020-2030.

54. In accordance with UNEP/MAP's 2018-2019 Programme of Work Activity 2.2.2.1: "Develop the main elements of six Pollution Reduction Regional Plans", the Secretariat (MED POL), mandated by the 20th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 20) (Tirana, Albania, December 2017), embarked on a process for development of the main elements for six Regional Plans, namely: Municipal wastewater Treatment Plants; Sewage Sludge Management; Agriculture nutrients Management; Aquaculture nutrients Management; Urban Storm water Management; and Marine Litter (upgrade). The Secretariat presented the main elements of the six Pollution Reduction Regional Plans to two Meetings of Regional Experts held in November 2018 and May 2019. The revised main elements were subsequently discussed by the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points in May 2019. The latter agreed on their final version and recommended their submission to the Meeting of the MAP Focal Points to be held in September 2019 for their approval prior to submission to the 21st Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 21) (Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019) for adoption.

55. UNEP/MAP's 2018-2019 Programme of Work Activity 2.1.1.1 mandated MED POL to prepare reports on the implementation of existing Regional Plans. Evaluation of status of implementation is built around the legal, institutional and technical measures included in each of the 10 existing Regional Plans. Conclusions and recommendations are presented to highlight success stories, gaps and way forward. The findings of this evaluation were submitted as "draft" for review of the MED POL Focal Points Meeting in May 2019. The evaluation will be finalized after validation of provided data and relevant findings by the Contracting Parties further to completion of the quantitative analysis of NBB data which require further update once its 4th reporting cycle is formally and successfully concluded in August 2019. Accordingly, the Secretariat will complete its updating of the evaluation reports by end September 2019.

56. Acknowledging that the year 2021 corresponds to a major milestone in the Mediterranean region, marking the end of the UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy (MTS) and the Regional Strategy for the Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2016-2021), simultaneously the Thirteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Malta, 11-13 June 2019) requested the Centre to a) review the progress made in the field of prevention of, preparedness for and response to marine pollution from ships in the Mediterranean region by analysing information gathered in the NAPs as well as any other relevant information; b) launch a wide consultation process involving national competent authorities, relevant regional and international institutions and stakeholders addressing challenges and offering expertise, resources, and funding to progress in the improvement of the prevention of and response to marine pollution from ships in the Mediterranean region and c) submit the draft post-2021 Mediterranean Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships to the Fourteenth Meeting of the Focal Points, for consideration. Within this process the Mediterranean Strategy and Action Plan on Ships' Ballast Water Management will be simultaneously updated, as required.

57. Concerning endangered species and key habitats, SPA/RAC updated the Action Plans for the conservation of cartilaginous fishes (Chondrichthyans), marine turtles and marine vegetation in the Mediterranean as well as the Regional Strategy for the conservation of the monk seal in the Mediterranean.

58. SPA/RAC has undertaken, in collaboration with Contracting Parties, the evaluation of SAP BIO implementation, after 15 years since its adoption, aimed to assess the actions achieved, existing gaps and pending issues at regional and national levels, calibrating the added value played by the role of SAP BIO for all Mediterranean countries, and providing options for a new post-2020 SAP BIO structure, elaboration steps and timeline.

59. The evaluation and the methodology for the analysis of the coherence between the SAP BIO and ICZM Protocol provisions with the view to contributing to the SAP BIO revision was discussed at the 5th National Correspondents Meeting of the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (SAP BIO - Marseille, France, 13-14 February 2019). In the same meeting the Contracting Parties provided inputs for the draft SAP BIO evaluation

including information on SAP BIO implementation at national level. The results of the evaluation were again verified by the 6th meeting of National Correspondents of SAP BIO (Portoroz, Slovenia, June 2019) and were presented to the 14th SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meeting (Portoroz, Slovenia, 18-21 June 2019). Following the outcome of COP 21, it is expected to start the revision of the SAP BIO in 2020 for consideration of the COP 22.

D. National Programmes of Measures

60. Further to the regional measures, the national programmes of measures, adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to implement specific Protocols and Regional Plans, should also take also into account the need to streamline the Ecological Objectives and achieve/maintain GES.

61. A concrete example on this national implementation was the development of updated National Action Plans (NAPs) in the framework of the LBS Protocol and SAP MED, which has been done in accordance with the pollution-related Ecological Objectives (EO 5, EO 9 and EO 10), with the aim to achieve/maintain GES on pollution and litter. The majority of the Contracting Parties updated their NAPs during the period 2015-2016, based on NAP Update Guidelines, prepared by the Secretariat. The updated NAPs have been endorsed by the COP 19 (Decision IG 22/8). With regard to the Contracting Parties which are EU Member States, it was agreed that the pollution-related part of the national Programmes of Measures (PoM) developed in the framework of the EU MSFD, represent the updated NAPs, providing that they take into account the specificities of the Barcelona Convention system and comply with the requirements of the Convention and its Protocols.

62. **National Action Plans (NAPs) on NIS and marine habitats have been developed in the framework of the SPA/BD Protocol, considering the IMAP priorities. SPA/RAC is supporting the elaboration of the NAPs concerning species introduction and invasive species for the State of Libya and Turkey and the preparation of the NAPs for the conservation of Marine Turtles in the State of Libya, Lebanon, Spain and Tunisia. National strategy to reduce illegal trade of marine turtles in Tunisia has been prepared and discussed during a national consultation workshop held on 20 of December 2018.**

63. **Based on the Guidance Document for the preparation of National Action Plans (NAPs) for the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ship (2016-2021) agreed upon by the Twelfth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC, addressing Ecological Objectives (EO 2, EO 9, EO 10 and EO 11), with the aim to achieve/maintain GES on non-indigenous species, pollution, litter and underwater energy/noise respectively, Albania, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey prepared their NAPs, including a national assessment. Such effort is expected to be replicated by other interested Contracting Parties (i.e. Algeria and Egypt) during the next biennium.**

E. Technical Guidelines

64. The implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols is facilitated by technical Guidelines, prepared in close coordination with the Contracting Parties. These guidelines clarify and provide guidance on technical aspects of the implementation of the Protocols and Regional Plans. Every effort has been made to take into account and streamline the ecological objectives and GES targets in the MAP guidelines delivered in the last 6 years.

65. Some recent examples include the Updated Guidelines under the Dumping Protocol (Guidelines for Management of Dredged Material and Placement for Artificial Reefs) as well as the Updated Guidelines for Management of Desalination Activities. The ultimate objectives set out in these Guidelines is the achievement/maintenance of GES for pollution and litter, taking into account relevant Ecological Objectives, which go beyond the strictly pollution-related ones, such as EO 1 on biodiversity, EO 6 on sea-floor integrity, EO 8 on coastal ecosystems and landscapes, etc.

66. Concerning threatened species, marine key habitats and Non-Indigenous Species (NIS), several guidelines and tools have been developed by SPA/RAC, **in line with the IMAP requirements** and made available to Contracting Parties through the SPA/RAC website or in hard copies; the most recent **ones** are:
- Monitoring guidelines to assess cetaceans' distributional range, population abundance and population demographic characteristics
 - Guidelines for the long-term monitoring programmes for marine turtles nesting beaches and standardized monitoring methods for nesting beaches, feeding and wintering areas
 - Guidelines to standardize methodologies to estimate demographic parameters for marine turtles' populations in the Mediterranean
 - **Guidelines for monitoring Mediterranean monk seal**
 - **Guidelines for monitoring sea birds**
 - **Guidelines for monitoring benthic marine habitats and updated reference list of marine habitat types**
 - Guidelines for Inventorying and Monitoring of Dark Habitats
 - Guidance on developing invasive alien species national and sub-regional lists **and Guidelines for monitoring NIS**
 - **Common Standards and Guidance on the Disposal of Oil and Oily Mixtures and the Use and Disposal of Drilling Fluids and Cuttings**
 - **Common Standards and Guidelines for Special Restrictions or Conditions for Specially Protected Areas (SPA) within the Framework of the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan**
 - **Guidelines for the Conduct of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)**

67. In accordance with the Decision IG.23/8, SPA/RAC, in close consultation with the Contracting Parties and regional experts, has elaborated the Updated Classification of benthic marine habitat types and the Updated Reference List of Marine Habitat Types for the Mediterranean region which was discussed during the meeting of Experts on the finalization of the Classification of benthic marine habitat types for the Mediterranean region and the Reference List of Marine and Coastal Habitat Types in the Mediterranean (Rome, Italy, 22-23 January 2019) and the 14th meeting of the SPA/BD thematic focal points and will be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and the COP 21 for its adoption.

68. In the current biennium, important progress has been achieved by MED POL including the following achievements:
- Guidance on Application of the Water Typology and related Monitoring and Assessment Aspects for concentration of chlorophyll a (CI 14) in the water column;
 - updated Guidance Factsheets for Common Indicators 13, 14, 17, 18, 20 and 21 related to the Ecological Objective 5 (Eutrophication) and Ecological Objective 9 (Contaminants); for the first-time proposed Guidance Factsheets for the Candidate Indicators 26 and 27 related to Ecological Objective 11 (Energy including underwater noise) that were approved by the Meeting of MED POL Focal Points;
 - summary of the main monitoring methodologies in use by the Contracting Parties in the marine environment, along with the traditional methods which are still valid;
 - preliminary proposal of the "Methodological Elements for Monitoring Floating Microplastics" that will be further elaborated in the biennium 2020-2021;
 - Protocol for monitoring interactions between marine litter and marine turtles with a view to harmonizing methods of data collection for monitoring and assessment in the Mediterranean.
 - Updated List of Priority Contaminants under UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention within the MED POL Monitoring Programme and will continue to contribute to coordinated efforts at different levels to fill in the gaps related to knowledge on priority contaminants with the view to their potential consideration in the framework of IMAP.

69. In the current biennium PAP/RAC has worked towards replacing Common Indicator 15 (EO7) by a new version, and updating Common Indicator 16 and Candidate Indicator 25 (EO8). CI 15 is proposed for replacement with "Location and extent of the habitats potentially impacted by hydrographic alterations" after suggestions expressed at the 6th EcAp Coordination Group Meeting

(Athens, Greece 2017) and at several other occasions such as at the PAP/RAC Focal Points meetings and the Sub-regional meeting on Coast and Hydrography (December 2017). The new Guidance Factsheet for CI15 as well as the updated Guidance Factsheets for CI 16 (EO8) and for Candidate Indicator 25 (EO8), were presented and agreed at the CORMON meeting on Coast and Hydrography (Rome, Italy, 21-22 May 2019) and are presented to the 7th EcAp Coordination Group Meeting as working document UNEP/MED WG.467/6 Indicator Guidance Factsheets for EO7 and EO8 Coast and Hydrography Common Indicators 15, 16 and 25.

F. Governance to foster ecosystem approach implementation

70. At COP 18, the Contracting Parties adopted a governance mechanism in Decision IG. 21/3 to ensure the efficient and coordinated implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap.

71. They established the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group consisting of MAP Focal Points, together with three specific correspondence groups, (on GES and targets: COR GEST, on monitoring: CORMON and on economic and social analysis, COR ESA), composed of national experts designated by the Contracting Parties, invited experts and respective MAP components.

72. Since 2008, six (6) Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group Meetings took place to review progress achieved and validate different outputs for the consideration by the MAP Focal Points meetings and COP.

73. Five CORGEST Meetings took place for each cluster (biodiversity and fisheries, pollution and marine litter, coast and hydrography), strengthened by an Integrated CORGEST Meeting to negotiate and propose the operational objectives, GES definition and related targets as well as a potential list of common indicators.

74. Furthermore, **thirteen (13)** CORMON Meetings took place discussing specifics of monitoring and assessment needs and two (2) COR ESA Meetings were held, with a focus on socio-economic aspects of ecosystem approach implementation.

75. Additional external resources were mobilized to support the different steps of the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap and the Programme of Work.

- EU funded EcAp-MED I (2013-2015) supported the development of ecological objectives, operational objectives, GES definition and targets
- EU funded EcAp-MED II (2015-2019): **The Mediterranean implementation of the Ecosystem Approach, in coherence with the European Union (EU) Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The EcAp MED II project has an overall objective to support UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention and its Southern Mediterranean Contracting Parties to implement the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) in synergy and coherence with the implementation of the European Union (EU) (MSFD). With the ultimate objective of achieving the Good Ecological Status (GES) of the Mediterranean Sea, the project supports the Southern Mediterranean Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to implement the EcAp Roadmap agreed in Decision IG. 21/3, through assisting them in establishing monitoring programmes in line with IMAP.**
- **Marine Litter MED (2016-2019): The overall objective of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED project is to support UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention and its Contracting Parties to prevent and manage marine litter through the implementation of the provisions of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean (adopted by COP 18 in 2013), focusing on the implementation of key reduction and prevention measures on marine litter as identified in the updated National Action Plans (NAPs), in a coherent and coordinated way through the development of regional marine litter guidelines. The enhancement of international and inter-regional cooperation, with a particular focus on the cooperation with**

the Black Sea Commission, is also part of the objectives of the project. Project's overall outcome is to progress towards achieving marine litter Good Environmental Status (GES) and marine litter reduction targets as agreed by COP 19 of the Barcelona Convention and the implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, through the implementation of selected and common marine measures of the NAPs/Programme of Measures in selected pilot areas. This project is also supporting the work on the candidate marine litter indicator 24.

- The project documents of the Child projects of the GEF funded MEDProgramme following validation of the activities by the GEF Operational Focal Points were prepared. Transboundary Diagnostics Analysis (TDA) update is envisaged as a part of the MedProgramme Component 1 – *Reduction of land-based pollution in priority coastal hotspots, and measuring progress to impacts*, representing the key element of International Waters (IW) component of Child 1.1 Project, with a budget of USD 3 million. Updating the TDA after 10 years from the previous assessment is an opportunity to take into account significant changes in the policy and cooperation frameworks in the region since 2005; to address areas not sufficiently covered under the so far and forthcoming Mediterranean assessments (such as gender, climate change impacts on ecosystem services and socio-economic activities, impact of pollution on marine biodiversity and similar); as well as to capture the most recent available data and assess trends. This work will contribute the preparation of 2023 MED QSR.
- GEF funded "Implementation of Ecosystem Approach in the Adriatic Sea through Marine Spatial Planning" (GEF-Adriatic Project), which, among other goals, aims to contribute to the development of national Integrated Monitoring Assessment programmes for Albania and Montenegro.
- In addition, the project for defining the methodological framework for marine spatial planning, piloted in Boka-Kotorska bay (Montenegro), **was realized in 2016-2017 with the aim to analyze and point out the possibility of using the vulnerability analysis based on ecosystem approach principles.**
- The Coastal Area Management Plan (CAMP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, **that is expected to start**, is also based to great extent on Ecological Objectives of the ecosystem approach.
- The CO-EVOLVE Interreg project the use of indicators of Ecological Objective 8 (Coastal ecosystems and landscapes) is being considered for assessment of Littoralization and Urbanization, in the context of sustainable tourism. As the project is based on ICZM and MSP, the EcAp indicators will be taken into consideration as much as possible.
- EU funded SEIS project that is supporting the implementation of SEIS national action plans for a number of Contracting Parties.
- **MAVA funded projects: MedKey Habitats II Project, MAVA Turtles Project. Specific support and assistance is given to countries in implementing monitoring programme dedicated to agreed common indicators on marine reptiles nesting sites.**
- **UNEP/MAP has agreed with DG NEAR of the EC to support the third phase of the MPA action with a complementary action on IMAP implementation, to be supported under the EU Green Med III Strategy with a Budget of EUR 4 million. Green MED III project aims to ensure that additional support is provided for the national implementation of IMAP and to address challenges related to the second phase of the IMAP (2019-2021) with particular focus on the integration aspect of national IMAP implementation. It will also follow-up on the existing country specific capacity assessments to further the lessons learnt during the implementation of the EcAp-MED II Project. Moreover, the project aims to develop an MPA Network strategy which addresses the practical elements of effective MPA management and IMAP implementation. The project is in the signature process and expected to start soon.**
- **In the framework of the Cooperation Agreement between UNEP and the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea Protection (IMELS), a voluntary contribution of EUR 2,015,000 has been provided by Italy in support of the activities included in the UNEP/MAP Programme**

of Work 2018-2019. Several activities have been undertaken in the current biennium which contribute to implementation of several steps of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap addressing assessment, monitoring, measures, implementation at national level and regional policy update as well as maximizing synergies with the work under MSFD.

- **Concept Notes for two new EU funded projects, EcAp-MED III and ML MED II, are under development: 1. The Efficient Implementation of the Ecosystem-based Approach for the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment of the Mediterranean Sea and Coasts in synergy with the EU MSFD, 2. Marine Litter MED II which aims to: (i) support monitoring and assessment for marine litter addressing issues outside of the scope of IMAP; (ii) scale up and expand pilot project implementation of key marine litter prevention and reduction measures; and (iii) enhance interregional cooperation with a focus on Black Sea region and other European Regional Seas.**

G. Synergies and visibility

76. Synergies have been established and strengthened with the relevant work under UNEP Regional Seas Programme, Global Programme of Action, EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (EU MSFD), OSPAR, Black Sea Commission and HELCOM. Synergies have been established with several regional projects aiming at facilitating the implementation of the EU MSFD. Of major relevance is the establishment of the Marine Litter Regional Collaboration Platform comprising over 22 Regional Partners to support the coordinated implementation of the Marine Litter Management Regional Plan in the Mediterranean.

77. The Mediterranean experience, lessons learnt and key achievements of the implementation of Ecosystem Approach Roadmap were presented and projected in several global, regional and national events. **Several meetings held in the framework of EU MSFD were attended and work of MAP presented by the Contracting parties and Secretariat. Currently every effort is being made to coordinate and maximise synergies with MEDREGION Project funded by the EU, aiming at supporting the Competent Authorities of the Contracting Parties which are EU Member States in the implementation of the second cycle of the EU MSFD, including the development of suggestions relating to the implementation of the New GES Decision and to ensure strong effective links with the work of the MAP Barcelona Convention on the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach.**