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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN**

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5th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group

Rome, Italy, 14-15 September 2015

Report of the 4th Meeting of EcAp Coordination Group

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UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2015



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**UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN**

17 November 2014
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4th Meeting of the EcAp Coordination Group

Athens, Greece, 9-10 October 2014

Final Report

4th Meeting of the EcAp Coordination Group

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Introduction

The 4th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Coordination Group was held in Athens, Greece on the 9-10 October 2014, pursuant to the actions taken since the last Conference of the Parties (**COP 18**) and based on the **EcAp Roadmap**, the last meetings of the Integrated Correspondence Group (**Integrated Corgest**) and the Monitoring Correspondence Group Meetings (**CORMONS**). The objectives of the 4th Meeting of the EcAp Coordination Group were the following: a) to give recommendations on the further development of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Guidance; b) to give early inputs and recommendations towards the development of an EcAp Measures Gap Analysis, based on the Secretariat's initial analysis; c) to give comments and recommendations on the draft Socio-Economic Analysis; d) to give comments and recommendations on the draft Offshore Action Plan; e) to give first reactions on the GFCM proposed common indicators regarding OE3; and f) to give first reactions on the ACCOBAMS proposed recommendations on common indicators regarding EO11.

Participation

The meeting was attended by 44 participants from the following Contracting Parties: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Union, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, and Spain.

Palestine also attended the meeting as an observer.

The Secretariat of the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), including its components, MED POL Programme (MEDPOL), the Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC), the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC), the Plan Bleu Regional Activity Center (PB/RAC), the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) and the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) were present at the meeting.

United Nations specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations were represented, including the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Agreement on the Conservation of the cetaceans in the Black Sea (ACCOBAMS), the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The following non-governmental organizations were represented by observers: the Enalia Physis, the Hellenic Marine Environment Protection Association (HELMPEPA), the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles (MEDASSET), the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and the IRIS-SES Project.

The list of participants is attached as Annex III to this report.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

The meeting was opened at 9.00 a.m. on 9 October 2014 by Mr. Gaetano Leone, Coordinator, Barcelona Convention Secretariat-UNEP/MAP. He reviewed the decisions and the progress related to EcAp, achieved since the last COP meetings. Mr. Leone thanked the participants and stressed the importance of taking action to protect the Mediterranean by strengthening sustainability in the region.

Agenda Item 2: Organizational matters

1. Following a short introduction of Mr. Leone, the meeting elected its officers as follows:

Chairperson: Mr. Ilias Mavroidis, Greece
Vice-Chairpersons: Mr. Almokhtar Saied, Libya and Ms. Jelena Knezevic, Montenegro

Rapporteur: Mme Nassira Rheyati, Morocco

2. Interpretation in English and French was available to the participants.
3. The meeting adopted the agenda set out in UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.401./1 and UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.401./2.

Agenda Item 3: Introduction of the Draft Monitoring and Assessment Guidance

4. The Secretariat presented the Draft Monitoring and Assessment Methodological Guidance (UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG.401/3) and provided information on the EcAp monitoring process ahead.
5. GFCM and ACCOBAMS Secretariats presented their proposals on common indicators related to Ecological Objectives EO3 (UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG.401/Inf.7) and EO11 (UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG.401/Inf.8) respectively.
6. This was followed by a comment from a Contracting Party on ACCOBAMS's presentation in regard to shipping noise. She also expressed the necessity to extend the frequency of monitoring.
7. Another Contracting Party encouraged the establishment of a framework for collaboration, noting that underwater noise is a common issue in the Mediterranean region and there is a need to address it on a regional level by possibly establishing a joint monitoring programme for underwater noise.
8. With regard to the Monitoring and Assessment Guidance on Biodiversity and Non-Indigenous Species (NIS), SPA/RAC stated that planning of country implementation and national engagement for recurrent funding of future monitoring are key challenges for biodiversity work, since this is a new area of monitoring on regional level.
9. IUCN promised to share their ongoing work on the classification of benthic habitats and their NIS (MedMIS - Mediterranean Marine Invasive Species) cell phone application and highlighted the need to work closer with CIESM and to strengthen taxonomist networks.
10. Some Contracting Parties noted that the list of species, especially cetaceans was too long and affirmed that there is a need to focus on those widely present in the region. For this purpose, in their view, every state should choose priority list of species to start monitoring on.
11. A Contracting Party proposed to organize a joint workshop on NIS together with OSPAR and promised to present a proposal on food webs at the next CORMON meeting, stressing the need to establish follow-up activities and plans. The Secretariat recalled that a joint workshop was also recently proposed by OSPAR experts to SPA/RAC with regard to collaboration on biodiversity indicators.
12. Another Contracting Party highlighted the importance to further look into the links between pressures and impacts (See Annex I on Recommendations).
13. For the Monitoring and Assessment Guidance on Pollution and Litter, a Contracting Party stressed the importance to choose the right species when it comes to biological monitoring. It asked for E. Coli to be part of the monitoring when it comes to microbiological effects and requested that the Secretariat prepares a summary table of common indicators adopted at COP 18.

14. A Contracting Party expressed the need to assess the added value of monitoring eutrophication offshore. They argued that priority should be given to contaminants monitoring. They welcomed the proposal of focusing on sea turtles as a basis to monitor entangled/ingested litter in the Mediterranean.
15. This was supported by other Parties.
16. Regarding the use of the TRIX index in relation to eutrophication in the Mediterranean, Contracting Parties' views were divided and they asked the online informal group on eutrophication to further look into alternatives to the TRIX index, as well as into its modified use in the Mediterranean.
17. The importance of citizens' initiatives was highlighted by IUCN and HELMEPA.
18. On Coast and Hydrography, PAP/RAC highlighted the uniqueness of coast related monitoring in the Mediterranean, while a Contracting Party volunteered to share their CAMP indicators experience and proposed them to be potentially integrated in EcAp monitoring.
19. REMPEC described the availability of oceanographic and meteorological data in the Mediterranean Operational Network for the Global Ocean Observing System (MONGOOS) and noted that this data will be available in the future on an online platform developed under the Project Mediterranean Decision Support System for Marine Safety – MEDESS-4MS. This system will also contain shoreline morphology, socio-economic and environmental layers for the entire region..
20. A Contracting Party welcomed the changes made in the list of manmade structures and stated that work is now ongoing in their country on how best use GIS information and how to measure length of coastline. They welcome the establishment of a coast and hydrography information expert group.

Agenda items 4 and 5: Draft Offshore Action Plan and Inter-linkages of the Offshore Action Plan and the Ecosystem Approach with specific emphasis on monitoring

21. After the REMPEC Secretariat's presentation, the EcAp Coordination Group Meeting provided recommendations on the draft Offshore Action Plan and on the monitoring work planned within its context.
22. A Contracting Party stressed the importance of using the ecosystem approach as guiding principle for future expert discussions on offshore monitoring, with the aim of linking pressures (offshore monitoring) and impacts (EcAp monitoring).

Agenda Item 6: Draft EcAp Measures Gap Analysis

23. The Secretariat presented the draft initial EcAp Measures Gap Analysis (UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG.401/5).
24. The Contracting Parties welcomed this document. They agreed that EcAp does not replace existing measures, but helps to structure them and asked for the further development of the analysis, in line with the recommendations annexed to this Report.

Agenda item 7: Draft Socio-Economic Analysis Report

25. The Plan Bleu Secretariat presented its Draft Socio-Economic Reports.

26. The Parties welcomed the Reports and asked the Secretariat to present the two drafts to the upcoming MAP Focal Points Meeting in March 2015 for further discussion and approval.

Agenda item 8: Conclusions and recommendations

27. Participants adopted a list of Recommendations, as contained in Annex I.

Agenda item 9: Any Other Business

28. Under this agenda item ACCOBAMS shared an information note on its program to assess cetacean populations and their distribution in the Mediterranean (the "ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative").

Agenda item 10: Closure of the meeting

29. The Chairperson closed the meeting at 16.30 hours on 10 October 2014.

Annex I
Final Recommendations

Final recommendations of the 4th meeting of the EcAp Coordination Group

The 4th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (**EcAp Coordination Group**) welcomed the ongoing work on monitoring and assessment, the initial measures gap analysis and to the socio-economic and offshore related activities.

It expressed support to the draft Socio-Economic Reports with comments received during the meeting and afterwards (by 31 October) and asked the Secretariat to present the two drafts to the upcoming MAP Focal Points Meeting in March 2015 for their further discussion and approval.

It welcomed the progress made on the development of common indicators in relation to Ecological Objectives EO3 and 11 and the partnership in this regard established with the Secretariats of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (**GFCM**) and of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (**ACCOBAMS**).

It mandated the upcoming Monitoring Correspondence Groups (**CORMONs**) and the CORMONs online informal working groups to:

- further discuss at the expert level the assessment criteria options described in the draft Monitoring and Assessment Methodological Guidance;
- specifically address in the biodiversity discussions the link of impacts and pressures;
- while updating the indicative list of species and habitats, take note of the need to focus on those species and habitats where data is most available in the region, noting possible sub-basin and local differences, especially in the upcoming initial phase of monitoring;
- further discuss those areas where it is likely that in the initial phase, due to inadequate level of data, the collection of new original data will be necessary to establish trends;
- further address the potential use of the TRIX index and its applicability to Mediterranean specifics (different nutrient levels) and assess alternative methods;
- further discuss the 2-tier approach in relation to biological effects, also looking into alternative methods and present suggestions at the upcoming MEDPOL Focal Points Meeting;
- further address how to best utilize citizen scientist initiatives in relation to the specific expert monitoring areas;
- look into the possibility of monitoring E. coli in microbiological pollution (9.5.1.);
- look into the possibility of developing a simplified master list of marine litter categories, especially for finding commonalities with the practice of other Regional Sea Conventions;
- in relation to coast and hydrography, address the scale of measuring the length of the coastline.

In addition, the meeting requested the Secretariat to:

- continue working closely together with the GFCM and ACCOBAMS Secretariats, to further elaborate the proposals on common indicators in relation to fisheries and marine noise respectively, looking specifically into synergies and complementarities with the ongoing work under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (**MSFD**) of the European Union;
- ensure the efficient start of the online informal working groups on biodiversity, contaminants, eutrophication and marine litter and the establishment of the group on coast and hydrography;
- present the outcome of the online informal working groups to the upcoming Integrated CORMON and to the upcoming MAP Components Focal Points Meetings, to ensure further

expert level discussion, before the presentation of the draft Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme to the next EcAp Coordination Group in September 2015;

- revise the draft Monitoring and Assessment Guidance based on the comments received by the Contracting Parties, noting flexibility needs in implementation, representing sub-regional and local specifics;
- in relation to the draft Offshore Action Plan, clarify further the entity in charge of gathering the Mediterranean Offshore Environment Impact Assessment (**EIA**) and the related data;
- in relation to upcoming offshore monitoring work, note the importance not only to build the upcoming offshore monitoring on the EcAp principles, but also to ensure that this work will enable to assess the links between impacts and pressures;
- ensure further science-policy interface and strengthened cooperation with key scientific partners, including the Mediterranean Science Commission (**CIESM**) and build on their available knowledge and data for the upcoming State of the Environment Assessment;
- prepare a summary table of COP 18 proposed indicators, common indicators and candidate indicators with an explanatory note;
- further develop and present to the upcoming MAP Focal Points Meeting in March 2015 the Initial Gap Analysis on existing measures under the Barcelona Convention relevant to achieving or maintaining good environmental status in the Mediterranean Sea;
- analyze further the implementation status of existing measures and present such analysis to the upcoming MAP Components Focal Points Meetings for further expert level comments;
- ensure that well informed discussions takes place in upcoming Focal Point Meetings on key elements, outstanding issues of the draft Gap Analysis, such as the identified gaps, both in relation to the implementation of existing measures and in relation to the needs of developing new regional measures;
- ensure the strong link and the introduction of EcAp targets in the ongoing revision of the National Action Plans (**NAPs**);
- ensure strong link between EcAp and the process leading up to a reviewed Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (**MSSD**), a Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan (**SCP Action Plan**), and the Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**), taking special note of the new proposed SDG on Oceans and Seas and the similarity of its vision to the objectives of EcAp;
- distinguish in the draft Gap Analysis between measures which are undertaken under the auspices of UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention and those undertaken by partner organizations and relevant projects;
- update the EcAp 2015 time-table.

The meeting encouraged the Contracting Parties to:

- send their written comments on the monitoring, socio-economic and offshore related work to the Secretariat by 31 October;
- send nominations to the Secretariat as soon as possible and volunteer to lead the online informal working groups;
- share their proposals on the inclusions of additional indicators into the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme, in line with the relevant COP 18 Decision (Decision IG. 23/1);
- send written comments and suggestions to the Secretariat as soon as possible, building on the recommendations of the respective CORMON Groups, on further elaboration of the key topics to be addressed by the online informal working groups;

- send written comments on the draft Gap Analysis to the Secretariat as soon as possible and no later than 5 December 2014;
- send their 2012-2013 national reports in the existing electronic form to the Secretariat by 31 October 2014;
- participate in the upcoming GFCM MedSuit meeting in 6-7 November 2014 in Rome, Italy, where the fisheries-related common indicators will be discussed among fisheries and environmental experts; and
- participate in the upcoming MAP Components Focal Points Meetings.

Annex II
Agenda

Thursday 9 October 2014

- Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting
- Agenda item 2: Organizational matters
- a) Election of officers
 - b) Adoption of the Provisional Agenda
 - c) Organization of work
- Agenda item 3: Introduction of the draft Monitoring and Assessment Guidance
- Agenda item 4: Draft Offshore Action Plan
- Agenda item 5: Inter-linkages of the Offshore Action Plan and the Ecosystem Approach, with specific emphasis on monitoring

Friday 10 October 2014

- Agenda item 6: Draft EcAp Measures Gap Analysis
- Agenda item 7: Draft Socio-Economic Analysis Report
- Agenda item 8: Conclusions and recommendations
- Agenda item 9: Any Other Business
- Agenda item 10: Closure of the Meeting

Annex III
List of Participants

List of Participants

ALBANIA / ALBANIA	<p>Ms Vjola Saliaga Expert at Water Resources Policy Department Ministry of Environment Duresit, No.27 Tirana Albania</p> <p>E-mail: Viola.saliaga@moe.gov.al</p>
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA / BOSNIE ET HERZÉGOVINE	<p>Ms Selma Cengic Executive Director Hydro – Engineering Institute Str Stjepana Tomica 1 PO Box 450 Sarajevo 71 000 Bosnia & Herzegovina</p> <p>Tel: +387 33207949 Fax:+387 33207949 E-mail: selma.cengic@heis.ba</p>
CROATIA / CROATIE	<p>Ms Nada Krstulovic Senior Scientist Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries Setaliste I. Mestravica 63 21000 Split Croatia</p> <p>Tel:+385 21 408006 Fax: +385 21 358650 E-mail: krstulovic@izor.hr</p>
CYPRUS / CHYPRE	<p>Mr Savvas Michaelides Officer Department of Fisheries and Marine Research Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment Vithleem str Strovolos 2033 Nicosia Cyprus</p> <p>Tel : +357.22807851 E-mail: smichaelides@dfmr.moa.gov.cy</p>
EGYPT / EGYPTE	<p>Mr Mohamed Farouk Osman Head Central Department of Coastal Zone Management Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) 30 Misr-Helwan El-Zyrae Road P.O. Box 11728 Maadi Cairo Egypt</p> <p>Tel: +202 25256483 Fax: +20225256475 E-mail: m_f_osman@hotmail.com</p>

<p>EUROPEAN UNION / UNION EUROPEENNE</p>	<p>Ms Marijana Mance Kowalsky Policy Officer Directorate-General for Environment Unit C2: Marine Environment and Water Industry Avenue de Baulieu 5, office BU 9 04/110 B-1049 Brussels Belgium</p> <p>Tel: +32 2 2982011 E-mail: marijana.mance@ec.europa.eu</p>
<p>FRANCE / FRANCE</p>	<p>M. Charles-Henri De Barsac Chargé de Mission Ministère de l'Ecologie, du Développement Durable et de l'Energie 6 Place des degrés 92055 La Défense cedex France</p> <p>Tel: +33 1 4081 7677 E-mail: charles-henri.de-barsac@developpement-durable.gouv.fr</p> <p>Mme Isabelle Terrier Adjointe à la chef de bureau Bureau des milieux marins Ministère de l'Ecologie, du Développement Durable et de l'Energie DGALN/DEB/LM1 Arche Sud 92055 La Défense cedex France</p> <p>Tel: +33 1 4081 3211 E-mail : isabelle.terrier@developpement-durable.gouv.fr</p>
<p>GREECE / GRECE</p>	<p>Ms Maria Peppas Head of Dept.of International Relations and EU Affairs, Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change 15 Amaliados Street 11523 Athens Greece</p> <p>Tel: + 30 210 6411717 Fax:+ 30 210 6434470 E-mail: m.peppas@prv.ypeka.gr</p> <p>Mr Ilias Mavroidis Senior Scientific Expert Dept. of International Relations and EU Affairs, Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change 15 Amaliados Street 11523 Athens Greece</p> <p>Tel: +30 210 6426531 Fax: +30 210 64 34 470</p>

	<p>E-mail: i.mavroidis@prv.ypeka.gr</p> <p>Mr Nicholas Mantzaris Policy Expert Dept. of International Relations and EU Affairs, Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change 15 Amaliados Street 11523 Athens Greece</p> <p>Tel: + 30 213 15 15 680 Fax: +30 210 64 34 470 E-mail: n.mantzaris@prv.ypeka.gr</p>
ISRAEL / ISRAEL	<p>Ms. Hadas Magen-Molho Director, International Relations Division Israel Ministry of Environmental Protection P.O. Box 34033 5 Kanfei Nesharim Street, 95464 Jerusalem Israel</p> <p>Tel: +972 2 655 39 93 Mobile: +972 50 621 52 56 E-mail: hadasm@sviva.gov.il</p>
ITALY / ITALIE	<p>Mr Leonardo Tunesi Research Director Head of the 3rd Dept. CRA15 "Marine Habitats and Biodiversity Protection" ISPRA -Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research - ETC/BD member Via Vitaliano Brancati, 60 Rome 00144 Italy</p> <p>Tel: +39 06 50074776 Fax : +39 06 50074955 E-mail: leonardo.tunesi@isprambiente.it</p> <p>Mr Giordano Giorgi ISPRA -Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research via Vitaliano Brancati, 48 Rome 00144 Italy</p> <p>Tel. +39 06.50074788 Fax +39 06.50072916 E-mail: giordano.giorgi@isprambiente.it</p>

LEBANON / LIBAN	<p>Mr Nadim Mroueh Head of Natural Resources Service Ministry of Environment Azarieh Building- Beirut Central District P.O. Box 11-2727 Beirut Lebanon</p> <p>Tel.:+961 1 976516 Fax: +961 1 976531 E-mail: nadim@moe.gov.lb</p>
LIBYA / LIBYE	<p>Mr Almokhtar Saied Head of Marine and Wildlife Section Environment General Authority (EGA) P. O. Box 83618 Al Gheran Tripoli Libya</p> <p>Tel: + 218 21-4873761 Fax:+ 218 21-4872160 E-mail: Mok405@yahoo.com</p>
MALTA / MALTE	<p>Mr Franck Lauwers Senior Environment Protection Officer Multilateral Affairs Team Director's Office Environment Protection Directorate St Francis Ravelin Floriana P.O. Box 200 MRS 1000 Luqa Malta</p> <p>Tel: +356 2290 7201 Fax: +356 2290 2295 E-mail: unep-map.malta@mepa.org.mt</p>
MONTENEGRO / MONTENEGRO	<p>Ms Jelena Knezevic Adviser to the Minister for the Environment Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism IV Proleterske brigade br. 19, 81000 Podgorica Montenegro</p> <p>Tel: + 382 20 446225 Fax: + 382 20-446215 E-mail: jelena.knezevic@mrt.gov.me</p>
MOROCCO / MAROC	<p>Mme Nassira Rheyati Ingénieur en Chef Chargée des dossiers Système des Nations Unies Direction du Partenariat, de la Communication et de la Coopération Département de l'Environnement 9, Avenue Araar, Secteur 16, Hay Ryad,</p>

	<p>Rabat 10100, Maroc</p> <p>Tel: +212 5 37576637 Fax: +212 5 37576638 Email : rheyati@environnement.gov.ma, r_nassira@yahoo.fr</p>
SPAIN / ESPAGNE	<p>Mrs Maria del Sagrario Arrieta Algarra Head of the Unit of Community Affairs Directorate General for the Sustainability of the Coast and the Sea Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs Plaza San Juan de la Cruz S/N 28071 Madrid, Spain</p> <p>Tel: +34-915975565 Fax: +34 91 5976902 E-mail: sarrieta@magrama.es</p>
OBSERVER / OBSERVER	
PALESTINE / PALESTINE	<p>Mr Mohammed Eila Deputy Director General of Projects and International Relation MED POL Focal Point Environment Quality Authority Alwehda Street Gaza Palestine</p> <p>Mobile: +972 599254767 Fax: +972 8 2847198 E-mail: meila@gov.ps</p>

**REPRESENTATIVES OF UNITED NATIONS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER
INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS/REPRESENTANTS DES INSTITUTIONS
SPECIALISEES DES NATIONS UNIES ET AUTRES ORGANISATIONS
INTERGOUVERNEMENTALES**

<p>GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN (GFCM) / COMMISSION GENERALE DES PECHEES POUR LA MEDITERRANEE (CGPM)</p>	<p>Ms Pilar Hernández Information Management Officer GFCM Secretariat General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Palazzo Blumenstihl, Via Vittoria Colonna 1, Rome 00193, Italy</p> <p>Tel: +39 0657055730 Fax: +39 0657056500 E-mail: pilar.hernandez@fao.org</p>
<p>AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS IN THE BLACK SEA, MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND CONTIGUOUS ATLANTIC AREA (ACCOBAMS)/ACCORD SUR LA CONSERVATION DES CETACES DE LA MER NOIRE, DE LA MEDITERRANEE ET DE LA ZONE ATLANTIQUE ADJACENTE</p>	<p>M Alessio Maglio Joint ACCOBAMS-ASCOBANS-CMS Noise Working Group member ACCOBAMS Secrétariat Jardin de l'UNESCO Terrasses de Fontvieille 98000 Monaco</p> <p>Tel: +377 9898 2078 Fax: +377 9898 4208 Email: alessio.maglio@sinay.fr, accobams@accobams.net</p>
<p>EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (EEA) / AGENCE EUROPEENNE POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT (AEE)</p>	<p>Ms Cécile Roddier-Quefelec Project Manager Mediterranean Area Cooperation Partnerships and Networks European Environment Agency Kongens Nytorv 6 Copenhagen Denmark</p> <p>Tel: +45 3343 5940 E-mail: cecile.Roddier-Quefelec@eea.europa.eu</p>
<p>INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) / UNION INTERNATIONALE POUR LA CONSERVATION DE LA NATURE (IUCN)</p>	<p>Mr Alain Jeudy de Grissac Marine Programme Manager Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) c/ Marie Curie 22, Malaga 29590 Spain</p> <p>Tel.: +34 952 028 451 Fax: +34 952 028145 E-mail: Alain.jeudy@iucn.org</p>

**NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
ORGANISATIONS NON-GOUVERNEMENTALES**

ENALIA PHYSIS	<p>Ms Nikoletta Papachristou Programme Officer ENALIA 14 Dionisiou Solomou Latsia, Nicosia 2231 Cyprus</p> <p>E-mail: npapachristou1@gmail.com</p>
HELMEPA – HELLENIC MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION ASSOCIATION	<p>Mr Ioannis Pesmatzoglou Maritime Training Officer HELMEPA 5 Pergamou Street 17121 N. Smyrni Athens Greece</p> <p>Tel: +30 210 9343088 Fax: +30 210 9353847 E-mail: training@helimpepa.gr, ioanpesma@gmail.com</p>
MEDASSET-MEDITERRANEAN ASSOCIATION TO SAVE THE SEA TURTLES	<p>Mr Vassilis Stamogiannis Director MEDASSET-Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles 1c Likavitou Street 106 72 Athens Greece</p> <p>Tel: + 30 210 3613572 Fax: + 30 210 3613572 E-mail: medasset@medasset.org</p> <p>Ms Elisabeth Boura Programmes Officer MEDASSET-Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles 1c Likavitou Street 106 72 Athens Greece</p> <p>Tel: + 30 210 3613572 Fax: + 30 210 3613572 E-mail: medasset@medasset.org</p>

World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) /	Mr Giorgos Paximadis Marine Programme Officer WWF Greece Lempessi 21 Athens Greece Tel : +30 210 3311987 E-mail : g.paximadis@wwf.gr
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PROJECTS/INSTITUTES

IRIS-SES Project	Ms Kalliopi Pagkou Research Director, Coordinator of the IRIS-SES project (DG ENV) Institute of Oceanography Hellenic Center for Marine Research 46.7 km Athinon-Souniou Ave. Mavro Lithari Anavissos 19013 Attica, Greece Tel: +30 22910 76409 Fax: +30 22910 76347 E-mail: popi@ath.hcmr.gr
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**SECRETARIAT TO THE BARCELONA CONVENTION
AND COMPONENTS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN
SECRETARIAT DE LA CONVENTION DE BARCELONE ET COMPOSANTES DU PLAN
D'ACTION POUR LA MEDITERRANEE**

<p>UNEP/MAP PNUE/PAM</p>	<p>Mr Gaetano Leone Coordinator Tel :+30 210 7273101 E-mail: gaetano.leone@unepmap.gr</p> <p>Mr Habib N. El Habr Deputy Coordinator Tel :+30 210 7273126 E-mail: habib.elhabr@unepmap.gr</p> <p>Mr Atila Uras Programme Officer Tel:+30 210 7273140 E-mail: atila.uras@unepmap.gr</p> <p>Ms Gyorgyi Gurban EcAp Project Officer Tel: +30 210 7273105 E-mail: gyorgyi.gurban@unepmap.gr</p>
<p>UNEP/MAP-MED POL PNUE/PAM-MED POL</p>	<p>Ms Tatiana Hema Programme Officer Tel.:+30 210 7273115 E-mail: tatiana.hema@unepmap.gr</p> <p>Ms Gehan El Sakka Marine Environmental Consultant E-mail: medpol.medpartnership@unepmap.gr</p>
<p>UNEP /MAP-MED PARTNERSHIP</p>	<p>Ms Virginie Hart Programme Officer Tel:+30 210 7273122 E-mail: virgine.hart@unepmap.gr</p>

<p>PLAN BLEU REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE (BP/RAC) / PLAN BLEU, CENTRE D'ACTIVITE REGIONAL (PB/CAR)</p>	<p>Mr Hugues Ravenel Director Plan Bleu, Centre d'Activité Régional (PB/CAR) 15 rue Ludwig van Beethoven Sophia Antipolis F-06560 Valbonne, France</p> <p>Tel: +33 4 92387138 Fax: +33 4 92387131 E-mail: hravenel@planbleu.org</p>
<p>REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER FOR THE PRIORITY ACTIONS PROGRAMME (PAP/RAC) CENTRE D'ACTIVITES REGIONALES DU PROGRAMME D'ACTION PRIORITAIRES (CAR/PAP)</p>	<p>Mr Marko Prem Deputy Director Kraj Sv. Ivana 11 Split HR-21000 Croatia</p> <p>Tel:+385 21 340475 Fax: +385 21 340490 E-mail: marko.prem@ppa.t-com.hr</p>
<p>REGIONAL MARINE POLLUTION EMERGENCY RESPONSE CENTRE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA (REMPEC) CENTRE REGIONAL MEDITERRANEEN POUR L'INTERVENTION D'URGENCE CONTRE LA POLLUTION MARINE ACCIDENTELLE (REMPEC)</p>	<p>Mr Gabino Gonzalez Programme Officer Maritime House, Lascaris Wharf, Valletta VLT 1921 Malta</p> <p>Tel.:+356 21 337296-8 Fax: +356 21 339951 E-mail: ggonzalez@rempec.org, rempec@rempec.org</p>
<p>REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER FOR SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS (SPA/RAC) CENTRE D'ACTIVITES REGIONALES POUR LES AIRES SPECIALEMENT PROTEGEES (CAR/ASP)</p>	<p>Mr. Khalil Attia Director Boulevard du Leader Yasser Arafat B.P. 337, 1080 Tunis Cedex Tunisia</p> <p>Tel: +216 71 206649, +216 71 206 851 Fax: +216 71 206490 E-mail: director@rac-spa.org</p> <p>Mr Daniel Cebrian Programme Officer Boulevard du Leader Yasser Arafat B.P. 337, 1080 Tunis Cedex Tunisia</p> <p>Tel: +216 71 206649, + 216 71 206 851, +216 71 206485 Fax: +216 71 206490 E-mail: daniel.cebrian@rac-spa.org</p>

<p>REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION (SCP/RAC) / CENTRE D'ACTIVITES REGIONALES POUR LA CONSOMATION ET LA PRODUCTION DURABLE (CAR/CPD)</p>	<p>Ms Meryem Cherif Project Manager Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) C/ Angli 31, 3rd floor, 3rd door 08017 Barcelona Spain Tel. +34 93 553 87 83, +34 93 5538790 Fax +34 93 882 36 37 E-mail: mcherif@scprac.org</p>
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