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Action Plan**
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Athens, Greece, 16-19 September 2025

Agenda Item 5: Specific Matters for Consideration and Action by the Meeting, including Draft Decisions

Draft Decision 27/4: Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035

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Note by the Secretariat

1. Responding to the mandate of the 23rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP23, Portorož, Slovenia, 5-8 December 2023) and its Ministerial Declaration, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) has been updated through an inclusive and extensive consultation process, under the leadership and guidance of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) and of its Steering Committee (SC).
2. From October 2023 until March 2025 a number of meetings took place, in presence and on line, progressively integrating in the MSSD comments and recommendations on thematic and governance gaps: two Steering Committee of the MCSD, one Thematic Ad Hoc MCSD, five meetings of the Extended MCSD SC as well as nine thematic working group meetings of national experts on Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), Circular Economy, and Ocean Economy/Sustainable Finance. The MSSD 2016-2025 Final Evaluation, developed by an independent consultant provided additional recommendations.
3. The 2025 “*The Mediterranean by 2050: A Foresight by Plan Bleu*” (MED2050 Report) has equally shared further light on the future evolution of key challenges in the Mediterranean and potential transition paths through six scenarios, proving some overall trends for the future: air and sea warming in the Basin by the end of the century, with an urgent need for adaptation regardless of the scenario considered; need to develop South/North technical cooperation to address common challenges and build on good practices; need to structure and raise sustainable finance to address the challenges of ecological and adaptive transition.
4. The 21st MCSD Meeting (Corinth, Greece, 24-26 June 2025) approved the MSSD 2026-2035 for consideration and submission to the 24th meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP24, Cairo, Egypt, 2-5 December 2025).
5. The MSSD 2026-2035 confirms its vision, introducing the need to ensure climate resilience, and further reinforcing the importance of biological diverse, productive, conserved, restored and wisely used ecosystems.
6. Climate Change becomes the first priority of MSSD 2026-2035, as it has been largely recognized as a cross-cutting pressing challenge that importantly affects the sustainable development and the marine and coastal ecosystems in the region.
7. The MSSD 2026-2035 thematic updates concern the reinforcement and introduction of specific actions on renewable energy, nature-based solutions, marine spatial planning, sustainable water and forest management, air quality, sustainable and circular business models, complemented by sustainable finance for a necessary transition of the region against climate and environmental challenges.
8. Governance updates concern both a reinforced role of sub-national and local authorities as implementers of sustainable development actions at local level, as well as an enhanced involvement of civil society, youth and women, private sector and financial institutions.
9. The monitoring of the progress of the MSSD 2026-2035 is ensured by seventeen Targets, inspired by the global agenda for sustainability and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of relevance for the Mediterranean Region, and have more than doubled compared to the seven targets of the MSSD 2016-2025 and cover all Objectives. Targets are aggregated at Objective level, rather than at Action level, and they are linked to MSSD dashboard indicators at regional level, and to SDGs indicators at global level. This new approach will allow a more strategic overview of the MSSD advancement and gaps.
10. Also, the MSSD flagship initiatives have doubled: each MSSD 2026-2035 Objective counts at least two flagship initiatives, confirming their key role as enablers for the concrete implementation and impact of the Strategy, that have to be upscaled both at national and regional level.
11. The implementation of this Decision is reflected in the proposed 2026-2027 PoW and Budget, especially under activities 5.2.2, 5.2.7, 5.2.8 and 7.1.6.
12. This proposed Decision and its Annex are hereby submitted to the Meeting of the MAP Focal Points (Athens, Greece, 16-19 September 2025) for consideration and possible transmission to the 24th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP24, Cairo, Egypt, 2-5 December 2025).

Draft Decision IG.27/4

Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035

The Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and its Protocols at their 24th Meeting,

Welcoming the outcome document of the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC-3) entitled “Our ocean, our future: united for urgent action”, reaffirming the strong global commitment to conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas and marine resources and reconfirming the need to strengthen the role of regional seas conventions and action plans,

Being inspired by the high-level celebration of the anniversary of the 50 years of the UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan and the 30 years of the Post-Rio Barcelona Convention, in UNOC-3, on 10 June 2025, as a strong sign of renewed commitment of the Contracting Parties, as reflected in their Ministerial Declaration,

Noting with appreciation Resolution 6/15 adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly on 1 March 2024, on strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution,

Recalling also the United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/296 of July 2022, entitled “Our Ocean, Our future, Our responsibility”,

Welcoming the High-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the UN General Assembly of September 2024, and the adopted Resolution on the Pact for the Future, that calls to action towards 2030 and reaffirms the commitment to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs (New York, September 2024),

Having regard to the Barcelona Convention, in particular Article 4 on general obligations, and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-2025, adopted by Decision IG.22/2 of COP 19, Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016,

Recalling the COP 23 Ministerial Declaration (Portorož, Slovenia, December 2023) that commits to a swift update of the MSSD 2016-2025, to effectively implement the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the regional level, seeking to amend current unsustainable trajectories and place the region on alternative pathways to sustainability and resilience,

Welcoming the publication “The Mediterranean by 2050: A Foresight by Plan Bleu” (MED2050 Report); *appreciating* the impressive work carried out by a large number of experts and *expressing* concerns about the alarming trends of the environmental situation and climate change and *highlighting* the need for urgent actions to bring the region back to sustainability paths,

Having considered the report of the 21st Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development and its recommendations (MCSD) (Corinth, Greece, 24-26 June 2025), endorsing the MSSD 2026-2035 for onward submission to the 2025 MAP Focal Points meeting and COP24,

1. *Take note* of the Final Evaluation Report of the MSSD 2016-2025 (UNEP/MED WG.620/Inf.20) implementation acknowledging the progress achieved but also the gaps in timely delivering SDGs in our region;

2. *Adopt* the updated Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development for the period 2026-2035 and its flagship initiatives, set out in Annex I to this Decision, as a strategic regional cooperation framework and a Mediterranean policy response to environmental and socio-economic drivers highlighted in the MED2050 Report to upscale concrete, sustainable and climate resilient development pathways and further boost the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the regional, sub-regional and national levels;

3. *Invite* the Contracting Parties to engage in upscaling and implementing the MSSD flagship initiatives, as well as encouraging large multi-level stakeholders' involvement;
4. *Encourage* the Contracting Parties and Regional Stakeholders to integrate as appropriate the MSSD 2026-2035 objectives, strategic directions, actions into their policies, strategies and plans for Sustainable Development, including through whole of society and whole of government processes;
5. *Encourage* the Contracting Parties and Regional Stakeholders to promote visibility and wide dissemination of the MSSD 2026-2035 at all levels;
6. *Invite* the Contracting Parties and the MCSD Members to collaborate for strengthening technical cooperation among all shores of the Mediterranean in addressing common challenges, build on good practices and raise new funding and sustainable finance to achieve ecological and adaptive transition;
7. Encourage the Secretariat (Plan Bleu/RAC) to communicate the MED2050 Report to better inform and shape policymaking, as well as to promote the implementation of the MSSD, at national level, by identifying the combinations of responses to national and regional challenges that could better fit a sustainable future;
8. *Invite* international organizations, initiatives and programmes working in the field of Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean to contribute to the implementation of the MSSD 2026-2035 and streamline its priorities in their work and commitments;
9. *Call on* all Donors and Funding Institutions that are active in the Mediterranean region, in primis the European Union as a Contracting Party to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and that steers an ambitious Sustainable Development agenda, to provide strong support to the MSSD 2026-2035 at all levels for its implementation including its flagship initiatives in interconnection with its relevant policies, in particular with the European Ocean Pact launched at UNOC-3 and the forthcoming New Pact for the Mediterranean;
10. *Request* the Secretariat to undertake a mid-term review of the status of implementation of the MSSD 2026-2035 under the MCSD leadership, ensuring large participation and to report its results to COP 26.

Annex I

Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035

Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035

Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 (MSSD 2026-2035) provides a strategic policy framework, built upon a broad consultation process, for securing a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region consistent with Sustainable Development Goals and to efficiently deliver them at regional and national level. It aims to harmonise the interactions between socio-economic and environmental goals, adapt international commitments to regional conditions, guide national strategies for sustainable development, and stimulate regional cooperation between stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable development. As highlighted in its subtitle (*‘Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social well-being and economic development’*), the Strategy is underpinned by the conviction that investment in the environment, green transition, climate resilience, circular economy supported by the development of green taxonomy and the whole of society’s involvement, is the best way to protect the Mediterranean Sea and coasts and achieve Good Environmental Status, secure long-term sustainable job creation and socio-economic development, leaving nobody behind while improving public health, and an enhanced quality of life.
2. The Strategy focuses on addressing cross-cutting issues that lie in the interface between environment and development. It addresses issues across sectoral, institutional and legal boundaries, emphasizing the interlinkages between environmental issues, climate change challenges, sea and coasts’ management and multiple use governance, sustainable circular economy, renewable energies, Water-Energy-Food -Ecosystem Nexus, Nature-based solutions, rural development and food security and management, sustainable cities and social challenges. The Strategy is also expected to boost synergies between the work of key national and regional stakeholders, by providing a commonly-agreed framework, thereby leading to increased efficiency in the implementation of sustainable development in the Mediterranean, as well as by further supporting the engagement of civil society, scientists, youth and women, financial institutions, private sector, local communities, thus ensuring an inclusive framework.
3. In particular the need to address climate change as a top priority for the Mediterranean basin is a red flag alert to be urgently addressed, while all key recent reports¹ confirm a worrisome scenario in the short and long term perspectives. The frequent and dramatic impacts on the environment, on key economic sectors of the region and last but not least on our lives, do not admit any further delayed action. Adaptation to climate change is for UNEP/MAP and its Contracting Parties to be jointly addressed. Doing so it will also contribute to further strengthening regional cooperation, weaving more specific and decentralized cooperation with sub-national authorities, municipalities, territories, to ensure targeted adaptation actions.
4. The Mediterranean Sea is home to a large diversity of ecosystems and species subject to considerable pressures and it is home to a large share of the world’s marine biodiversity. It is also the victim of decades of unsustainable use, despite the efforts for an effective management. It also suffers most from the impacts of climate change, warming 20% faster than the rest of the world according to the MedECC², thus, it holds the highest percentage of threatened marine habitats, including 21% vulnerable and 11% endangered on the EU28 Red List. Its coasts account for 31 per cent of global tourist arrivals. Development of large and mega-cities is increasing pressures from the rising population levels and the accumulation of economic activities in coastal zones. Mediterranean agricultural products and diet have a global reputation, but depend on the sustainability of rural landscapes, resources and decent working conditions. Global shipping routes

¹ Plan Bleu/RAC State of the Environment and Development Report (SoED 2020); Med2050 foresight exercise; First MedECC assessment report (MAR1 2020); MedECC Special Report on Climate Wef Nexus: moving away from silo approaches (2024) and the special report on Coastals Risks: building resilience in coastal communities

² MedECC 1st Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)

through the Mediterranean constitutes an important transit and trans-shipment area for international shipping, hosting 17% of the world's oil tanker capacity and making the density of maritime traffic exceptional for a semi-closed sea. The recent surge of interest in the exploitation of hydrocarbons and minerals under the Mediterranean seabed poses also increased risks for the environment.

5. Significant discrepancies in development levels between countries, together with conflicts in the region, pose challenges for envisaging a sustainable future of the Mediterranean basin. The fragility of the region is further aggravated by its sensitivity to climate change: the Mediterranean ecosystems are and will continue to be among the most impacted by global climate change drivers
6. The Strategy is formulated, taking into account the outcomes of the **United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)** which put particular focus on the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, the **United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, the adopted UN Resolution on the **Pact for the Future**³, that reaffirms the commitment to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs and urgently calls for accelerating progress towards achieving the Goals.
7. The Strategy equally takes into account the **UNGA Resolution 76/296 of July 2022, "Our Ocean, Our Future, Our Responsibility"**, which highlights that its goals can also be successfully applied at regional level and the **2024 UNEA 6, UNEP/EA.6/Res.15** on Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution, scale-up means of implementation to enhance capacity to deliver ocean-related SDGs, as well as the **United Nations' Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030**⁴ with its vision 'The science we need for the ocean we want'.
8. The Strategy embeds the commitments and targets stemming from the **2015 UN Paris Agreement**, the **2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)**, the **European Green Deal**, the **International Maritime Organization's Strategy for reducing GHG emissions from ships**, the **Post-2020 SAPBIO**⁵ and other UNEP/MAP recently adopted policies, including **Programmes of Measures to achieve Good Environmental Status of Mediterranean Sea and Coasts**.
9. The Strategy will be endorsed in 2025, an important milestone year both at the global as well as at the regional Mediterranean level for the protection, conservation and sustainable use of marine environment and its resources: it coincides with the 3rd UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-3, Nice, France, 9-13 June 2025) that gave renewed impetus to the acceleration of global efforts and mobilization of all actors towards the achievement of SDG 14; the activation of implementation of numerous concrete new commitments with secured financing, by a wide array of stakeholders, submitted at the preceding 9th Our Ocean Conference (OOC-9, Athens, Greece, 15-17 April 2024); the likely entry into force of the historic Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement); the 50 year anniversary of UNEP/MAP and the 30 years of the Post Rio Barcelona Convention, that culminated with the Ministerial Declaration renewing their commitment for a sustainable Mediterranean, and their remarkable achievements and unique institutional role in the protection and preservation of the Mediterranean Sea and its sustainable development; the EU Ocean Pact and the upcoming New Pact for the Mediterranean, providing integrated frameworks to strengthen policy coherence and a thriving blue economy for the Mediterranean region; the entry into force of the designation of the Mediterranean Sea as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter (Med SOx ECA) further limiting air pollution from ships, pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI; and finally, the 30 year anniversary of the establishment of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSDD), the advisory body of UNEP/MAP for integrating environmental considerations into socioeconomic policies and promoting sustainable development in the Mediterranean, responsible

³ Resolution A/RES/79/1 adopted by the General Assembly on 22 September 2024

⁴ <https://www.unesco.org/en/decades/ocean-decade>

⁵ Decision IG.25/11 on the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO)

for the elaboration of the Strategy.

10. These milestone achievements reaffirm the strong commitment and vision towards sustainability and acceleration of the green transition in the region, through the constructive collaboration of all stakeholders.

11. The institutional landscape is characterized by regional initiatives focusing on increased collaboration between all shores of the Mediterranean, such as the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and Horizon Europe initiative and its Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters"⁶ that aims to protect and restore the health of ocean and waters by 2030. Other regional and sub-regional initiatives, as the WestMed Initiative⁷ and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)⁸, focus on sustainable development issues to be addressed at the Mediterranean level, looking also at the most significant sources of environmental degradation in the region.

12. The Strategy is built around the following vision:

A prosperous, climate resilient, and peaceful Mediterranean region in which people enjoy a high quality of life and where sustainable development takes place within the carrying capacity and within the limit of acceptable change of biologically diverse healthy, productive, conserved, restored wisely used and effectively managed ecosystems.

13. This is achieved through common objectives, shared actions, strong involvement of all stakeholders, cooperation, solidarity, equity and participatory governance.

14. A set of guiding principles also informs the Strategy: the importance of an integrated approach to environmental and sustainable development planning; an openness to a plurality of future development models; a balanced approach to territorial development; the precautionary and polluter pays principles; a participatory approach to policy and decision-making; the importance of evidence-based policy; the reconciliation of long and short-term in terms of planning and evaluation; transparency; and, the partnership between the UNEP/MAP system and other international and regional organizations.

15. The Strategy follows a structure based on six objectives that lie in the interface between environment and development, which were chosen to provide the scope for an integrated approach to address sustainability issues. The first Objective on climate change reflects the urgency to accelerate related adaptation actions, objectives 2, 3 and 4 reflect a territorial approach, while the last two objectives are cross-cutting, addressing key policies and areas, as follows:

- 1 Address climate change with emphasis on adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority
- 2 Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems
- 3 Promote sustainable resource management, especially water, food security and systems through sustainable forms of rural development
- 4 Plan and manage sustainable, resilient Mediterranean cities
- 5 Accelerate transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance
- 6 Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and

⁶ Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters

⁷ <https://westmed-initiative.ec.europa.eu>

⁸ <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu>

sustainable development

16. A set of **strategic directions** is formulated for each of the six overall objectives. The strategic directions are complemented by **national and regional actions**, as well as **flagship initiatives** and **targets**. The actions aim at providing guidance and inspiration for the most effective implementation of the Strategy. Not all countries may have the necessity or the resources to undertake all the proposed actions: it may be preferable to adapt the proposed actions to national needs. **The targets** are inspired by the global and regional agendas for sustainability and SDGs of relevance for the Mediterranean Region, considering its specificities, and monitor the Strategy progress at the objectives' level' along with the framework of regional and global indicators. **The flagship initiatives** have an upscaled key role in the framework of the Strategy implementation, as concrete initiatives and best practice that can lead the way in supporting the countries and stakeholders to partner up, commit and promote replication and spin off initiatives on sustainable development, both at regional and national level.

Objective 1: Address climate change with the emphasis on adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority

Targets
Target 1: By 2030, Contracting Parties should minimize the impact of climate change and Mediterranean Sea acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches, as well as investments on climate-resilient infrastructures, while minimizing negative and fostering positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity
Target 2: By 2030 Contracting Parties should develop strategies that include information on climate change risks, its priorities, plans and actions to build adaptation and climate resilience
Target 3: by 2030 Contracting Parties should develop and submit their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to contribute to limiting global warming to 1.5°C, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 43% and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050
Target 4: By 2030, Contracting Parties will reach a minimum of 20% of renewable energy in their energy mix, by increasing the renewable energy share derived from renewable resources in total final consumption, thus encouraging shifting towards energy transition, including soil management and food systems' transformation and building sectors

Strategic Directions
1.1: Increase scientific knowledge, education, raise awareness, and develop technical capacities to deal with climate change and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems
1.2: Accelerate the uptake of climate smart and climate resilient responses
1.3: Leverage existing and emerging climate finance mechanisms, including international and domestic instruments, and enhance the engagement of the private and finance sectors
1.4: Encourage institutional, policy, legal and legislative reforms and initiatives for the effective mainstreaming of climate change responses into national and local development frameworks in all sectors
1.5 Promote economy decarbonization energy transition and deployment of renewable energies

1.6 Strengthen national and local capacities on the application of nature-based solution for climate change adaptation and mitigation

Objective 2: Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems

Targets
Target 5: By 2030, Contracting Parties have ratified the Barcelona Convention Protocols and the appropriate legislative measures to implement them at the national level have already been taken
Target 6: By 2030 Good Environmental Status of marine and coastal environment is maintained and enhanced through effective implementation of Ecosystem Approach and commitment under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols
Target 7: By 2030, at least 30 per cent of the Mediterranean Sea is protected and conserved through well connected, ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, ensuring adequate geographical balance, and sustainably managed by applying ecosystem-based approaches including biodiversity and climate change-informed marine spatial planning, and by conducting environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments
Target 8: By 2030 Contracting Parties shall ensure effective implementation of the legally binding measures adopted under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols on wastewater, marine litter, plastic pollution and under IMO International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Convention and its Annexes)

Strategic Directions
<i>2.1 Strengthen implementation, compliance and monitoring with regional requirements of regulatory and policy frameworks of the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention for coastal and marine management</i>
<i>2.2 Promote balanced and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources</i>
<i>2.3: Promote well connected-ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures and nature-based solutions at national, transboundary and Mediterranean level and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss</i>

Objective 3: Promote sustainable resource management, especially water, food security and systems through sustainable forms of rural development

Targets
Target 9: By 2030, Mediterranean Countries ensure that at least 75% of their population use safely managed drinking water services and at least 30% use safely managed sanitation in a multi-level context of water stress, competing demands and growing shortages, particularly for vulnerable populations and women.
Target 10: By 2030, Mediterranean Countries ensure that at least 90% of the population has access to affordable, safe, and nutritious food all year round, through the promotion of resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems, including local supply chains

Strategic Directions
<i>3.1: Promote the circular/regenerative use, management and conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Natural Resources and ecosystems in the Mediterranean Region</i>
<i>3.2: Promote conservation and use of indigenous or traditional plant varieties and domestic animal breeds, value traditional knowledge and practices in rural management decisions</i>
<i>3.3: Promote inclusive and sustainable rural development, with a specific focus on poverty eradication, One Health, food security, women's empowerment and youth employment, including equitable and sustainable access to basic local services for rural communities</i>
<i>3.4: Ensure access of local producers to distribution channels and markets, including the tourism market</i>

Objective 4: Plan and manage sustainable **and resilient** Mediterranean cities

Targets
Target 11: By 2030, all Mediterranean Countries have substantially reduced waste generation through prevention, recycling and reuse, particularly by ensuring that at least 60% of municipal solid waste is sustainably recycled, composted or managed, including separate collection and material recovery, including biowaste, with emphasis on packaging waste and on the most environmentally damaging SUP products as a priority.
Target 12: By 2035, Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have adopted regulatory and policy frameworks with ambitious health-based standards for indoor and outdoor air quality in line with the World Health Organization (WHO).

Strategic Directions
<i>4.1: Apply holistic and integrated spatial planning processes and other related instruments, as well as improved compliance with respective rules and regulations, to increase economic, social and territorial cohesion and reduce pressures on the environment</i>
<i>4.2: Encourage inclusive urbanization and strengthen capacities for participatory and integrated human settlement planning and management</i>
<i>4.3: Promote the protection and rehabilitation of historic urban areas</i>
<i>4.4: Promote sustainable production, use of sustainable products and effective waste management within the context of a more circular economy, as well as to foster sustainable consumption patterns among citizens</i>
<i>4.5: Promote urban spatial patterns and technological options that reduce the demand for transportation, improve urban air quality and stimulate sustainable mobility and accessibility in urban areas</i>
<i>4.6: Promote green infrastructures and renewable energies and improve energy efficiency to contribute towards reducing the ecological footprint of the built environment</i>
<i>4.7: Enhance urban resilience in order to reduce vulnerability to risks from natural and human-induced hazards including climate change</i>

Objective 5: **Accelerate** transition towards **sustainable**, green, blue **and circular** economy **and sustainable finance**

Targets
Target 13: By 2030, Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have in place effective regulatory and policy frameworks, including economic incentives, aimed at facilitating the development of sustainable business models that integrate circularity and eco-innovation principles in the green and blue economies, while contributing to the development of non-pollutant and socially inclusive economies, in line with the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan for the Mediterranean.

Target 14: By 2035 Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have established sustainable finance frameworks that mobilize capital towards green and sustainable investments, while fostering collaboration among all stakeholders.

Strategic Directions
<i>5.1: Create green, just and decent jobs for all, particularly youth and women, to eradicate poverty and enhance social inclusion</i>
<i>5.2: Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, to support the shift towards circular economy approaches and sustainable business models</i>
<i>5.3: Encourage innovation, public private partnerships and sustainable solutions to advance towards the objectives of a just low-carbon, circular, green and blue economy</i>
<i>5.4: Promote the integration of sustainability, circularity and climate change principles and criteria on the programming and evaluation frameworks of public and private investment</i>
<i>5.5: Promote an integrated financial ecosystem through a Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance aiming to foster the channeling of private and public capital into sustainable investments.</i>

Objective 6: Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.

Targets
Target 15: By 2030, Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have formal mechanisms in place to ensure subsidiarity and synergies between policies at different levels of decision-making and across sectors in the long-term and across borders thus enhancing policy coherence on sustainable development (PCSD), including involvement of stakeholders.
Target 16 : By 2030, ensure that all learners, including the general public, acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
Target 17: By 2035, Mediterranean Countries have acceded to the Aarhus Convention.

Strategic Directions
<i>6.1: Enhance regional, sub-regional and cross-border dialogue and cooperation, including on emergency-preparedness</i>
<i>6.2 Strengthen the role, awareness and capacities of sub-national and local governments/ municipalities and of National and Regional Parliaments for implementing national and subnational sustainable development strategies and thus contribute to the achievement of SDG and MSSD objectives</i>
<i>6.3: Promote the engagement of civil society, scientists, youth and women, financial institutions, private sector, local communities and other stakeholders in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive whole of society processes and integrity in decision-making</i>
<i>6.4: Promote the implementation, and monitoring of the SD Strategies at all levels of government, considering synergies and tradeoffs between different policies and sectors, including intersectional management (WEFE NEXUS) by improving policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) based on whole of government approach, inter-ministerial coordination and multi-level government</i>
<i>6.5: Promote education and research for sustainable development</i>
<i>6.6: Strengthen regional capabilities for information management and enhance the promotion of evidence-informed policymaking and foresight</i>

17. The third chapter of the Strategy focuses on **implementation, funding and monitoring** aspects and **its implementation**.
18. Although facilitated by the UNEP/MAP system **and its Components**, it is the participation and active role of all stakeholders that will play a decisive role in the delivery of the Strategy. The UNEP /MAP system provides leadership and guidance with respect to implementing the Strategy. The UNEP/MAP action plans formulated with a view to implementing the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention, as well as other key existing regional mechanisms and instruments, are essential tools for implementing the Strategy. The UNEP /MAP system is of primary importance to provide support and technical guidance to the Contracting Parties to the Convention, as well as for coordinating implementation actions and monitoring processes. The **Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development and its Steering Committee** are key **bodies** within this system for **leading and** supporting the implementation of the Strategy, **its evaluation and update processes**.
19. **Intergovernmental and regional and sub-regional organizations** also have a very important role, working in tandem with each other and with the UNEP/MAP system, to facilitate synergies with countries using the Strategy as a common platform.
20. Local authorities are key actors of the Strategy implementation as around 70% of SDG's rely on their effective work, while they are closer to citizens and can therefore support related engagement.
21. Delivering the 2030 Agenda as a whole requires youth and women's empowerment, and inclusive policies that leave no one behind. In the implementation of the Strategy, the role of Civil society, the youth and women's role becomes more pronounced notably in the framework of the implementation of circular green and blue economy, not only through corporate social responsibility, but also through more sustainable consumption and the production processes, and to take up important tasks related to awareness and sensitization.
22. The private sector is a key partner for the implementation of the Strategy. As a key player in the reinforcement of green circular economy, the private sector can be one of the strongest allies in the process of implementing the Strategy.
23. For funding bodies, the Strategy contains a set of widely-agreed regional objectives, as well as strategic directions within these objectives, which will help such bodies to position and assess funding proposals aimed at advancing sustainable development in the region.
24. Putting in place adequate institutional structures is a key priority in providing for effective implementation of the Strategy. The Strategy in this area rests on two pillars: Put in place or strengthen structures for sustainable development implementation at national and regional scale, and ensuring their adequate resourcing; and, strengthen regional processes for the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy.
25. Implementation of the Strategy, based on the ambitious but necessary and realistic vision of boosting a sustainable Mediterranean on strong economic and social foundations, needs significant financial resources. The Strategy includes a series of actions to strengthen capacity for financing its implementation such as a project portfolio, capacity building processes and an investment facility for funding sustainable development actions in the Mediterranean.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

26. Sustainable development seeks to address the needs of current and future generations, utilizing natural resources and ecosystems in ways that preserve and sustain them, while further accelerating the decarbonization process, and ensure equitable access to them in the present and the future. It sets the framework for securing viable and lasting development and decent livelihoods for all, which are particularly important considerations in the current challenging Mediterranean socio-economic context.
27. The Strategy takes into account the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) which put particular focus on the green economy in the context of sustainable

- development and poverty eradication, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN Resolution on the **Pact for the Future**⁹, that reaffirms the commitment to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs and urgently calls for accelerating progress towards achieving the Goals.
28. The Strategy equally takes into account the **UNGA Resolution 76/296 of July 2022, “Our Ocean, Our Future, Our Responsibility”**, which highlights that its goals can also be successfully **applied at regional level**, the **2024 UNEA 6, UNEP/EA.6/Res.15** on strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution, scale-up means of implementation to enhance capacity to deliver ocean-related SDGs, as well as the **United Nations' Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030**¹⁰ with its vision ‘The science we need for the ocean we want’.
29. The Strategy embeds, inter alia, the commitments and targets stemming from the **2015 UN Paris Agreement**, the **2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)**, the **European Green Deal**, the **International Maritime Organization’s Strategy for reducing GHG emissions from ships**, the **Post-2020 SAPBIO**¹¹ and other **UNEP/MAP policies adopted after 2016, including Programmes of Measures to achieve Good Environmental Status of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast**.
30. The Strategy will be endorsed in 2025, an important milestone year both at the global as well as at the regional Mediterranean level for the protection, conservation and sustainable use of marine environment and its resources: it coincides with the 3rd UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-3, Nice, France, 9-13 June 2025) that gave renewed impetus to the acceleration of global efforts and mobilization of all actors towards the achievement of SDG 14; the activation of implementation of numerous concrete new commitments with secured financing, by a wide array of stakeholders, submitted at the preceding 9th Our Ocean Conference (OOC-9, Athens, Greece, 15-17 April 2024); the likely entry into force of the historic Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement); the 50 year anniversary of UNEP/MAP and the 30 years of the Post Rio Barcelona Convention, that culminated with the Ministerial Declaration renewing their commitment for a sustainable Mediterranean, and their remarkable achievements and unique institutional role in the protection and preservation of the Mediterranean Sea and its sustainable development; the EU Ocean Pact and the upcoming New Pact for the Mediterranean, providing integrated frameworks to strengthen policy coherence and a thriving blue economy for the Mediterranean region; the entry into force of the designation of the Mediterranean Sea as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter (Med SOx ECA) further limiting air pollution from ships, pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI; and, finally, the 30 year anniversary of the establishment of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), the advisory body of UNEP/MAP for integrating environmental considerations into socioeconomic policies and promoting sustainable development in the Mediterranean, responsible for the elaboration of the Strategy.
31. These milestone achievements reflected in the Strategy reaffirms the strong commitment and vision towards sustainability and acceleration of the green transition in the region, through the constructive collaboration of all stakeholders.
32. Sustainable development is of key importance for the Mediterranean: it is a closed sea, in which water renewal is limited by the narrow connection to the ocean, and therefore particularly sensitive to pollution. In addition, its mild climate makes it home to a large diversity of ecosystems and species. The Mediterranean is also subject to considerable pressures. With its rich history and exceptional natural and cultural landscapes, its coasts accounted for 30 per cent of global tourist arrivals in 2011, while in previous years the figure had reached more than 35 per cent. The Mediterranean is the first world tourist destination with 360 million tourists in 2020 with a forecast to reach 500 million by 2030 (UNWTO, 2019), largely concentrated from June to September and on the coast. Approximately half of

⁹ Resolution A/RES/79/1 adopted by the General Assembly on 22 September 2024

¹⁰ <https://www.unesco.org/en/decades/ocean-decade>

¹¹ Decision IG.25/11 on the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO)

the 2017 arrivals -170 million - are in Mediterranean coastal areas, intensifying the concentration of human-made pressures in coastal zones, particularly during the summer season. Moreover, the Mediterranean region hosts 26 million cruise passengers/year¹².

33. At the same time, international tourism receipts reached 190 billion Euros, representing approximately 26 per cent of the global total. Urban agglomerations on the Mediterranean coasts, along with tourist infrastructure, have resulted in the development of large and mega-cities¹³, with consequent pressures from the rising population levels and the accumulation of economic activities in a particularly fragile environment Mediterranean, coastal and sea products and services, the agricultural products, as well as Mediterranean diets, have a global reputation, but depend entirely on the sustainability of coastal and marine resources and rural landscapes, and decent working conditions. Global shipping routes through the Mediterranean make the density of maritime traffic exceptional for a semi-closed sea. The recent surge of interest in the commercial exploitation of hydrocarbons and minerals under the Mediterranean seabed also poses increased risks for the Mediterranean environment.
34. Significant discrepancies in development levels and living standards between countries, together with the conflicts in the region, which are already negatively affecting investment and development, pose also challenges for envisaging a sustainable future of the Mediterranean basin. The fragility of the region is further provoked by its sensitivity to climate change: in its Sixth Assessment Report¹⁴, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that “during the 21st century, climate change is projected to intensify throughout the region. Air and sea temperature and their extremes (notably heat waves) are likely to continue to increase more than the global average (high confidence)”. Over the last three decades, marine heatwaves (MHWs) in the Mediterranean Sea have caused mass-mortality events in various marine species, and critical losses for seafood industries. In the future, MHWs may undermine many benefits and services that Mediterranean ecosystems normally provide, such as food, maintenance of biodiversity, and regulation of air quality¹⁵.
35. The Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedEcc) have confirmed that due to global and regional trends in the drivers, impacts of Climate Change will be exacerbated in the coming decades, especially if global warming exceeds 1.5 to 2°C above the pre-industrial level. Significantly enhanced efforts are needed in order to adapt to inevitable changes, mitigate change drivers and increase resilience¹⁶.
36. The aim of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 is to provide a strategic policy framework, built upon a broad consultation process, for securing a sustainable future for the region. The rationale behind the Strategy is the need to accelerate the sustainable development of the region, by equally tackling interlinked key challenges as climate change, biodiversity protection and green transition, by harmonizing the interactions between socio-economic and environmental goals, in line with the SDGs and Agenda 2030 to adapt international commitments to regional conditions, to guide national sustainable development strategies and to stimulate regional cooperation between stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable development. The Strategy is underpinned by the conviction that investment in the environment and steady progress towards decarbonization is the best way to secure long-term, sustainable job creation and socio-economic development, and an essential vehicle for the achievement of social and economic objectives. For this reason, the Strategy focuses on addressing cross-cutting issues that lie in the interface between environment and development. It addresses issues across sectoral, institutional and legal boundaries, emphasizing the interlinkages between environmental issues and economic and social challenges, rather than specific economic sectors such as tourism or agriculture. The Strategy is also expected to lead to synergies being forged between the work of important national and regional players and stakeholders, by providing a commonly agreed framework, thereby leading to increased efficiency in the implementation of sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

¹² 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers (SoED 2020)

¹³ The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in its 2018 "World Urbanization Prospects" report defines megacities as urban agglomerations with over 10 million inhabitants

¹⁴ Sixth IPCC Synthesis Report (AR6) was released on 20 March 2023

¹⁵ 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report

¹⁶ First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) on “Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future”, MedECC, 2020

37. In this framework, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has a pivotal cross cutting role, therefore integrating ESD into strategic planning and community-based initiatives is crucial to support understanding, resilience and sustainable practices of all stakeholders, including citizens, towards adaptation to climate change, marine conservation, sustainable urban development, and green economic models in the Mediterranean region.

2.1. Background

38. At the 12th Conference of the Contracting Parties to Barcelona Convention in Monaco in November 2001, in line with the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention decided to prepare a Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

39. The Strategy 2005-2015 was developed as a result of a consultation process that mobilized Mediterranean stakeholders, including Governments and civil society through the participation of non-governmental organizations and key experts and adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in 2005 at their 14th meeting in Portoroz, Slovenia. The 2016-2025 Strategy has been formulated taking into account the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which put particular focus on the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and included an agreement to draft Sustainable Development Goals.

40. The need for the Strategy remains strong today, as while the new global and regional context has changed significantly, and the pressures and challenges are even more pronounced. At the same time, under the Barcelona Convention new regional instruments, voluntary and legally binding measures have been developed and are under implementation to address these pressures.

Mandate for the review of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development

41. In light of the outcomes of Rio+20, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention requested, at their 18th Ordinary Meeting held in Istanbul, Turkey, in December 2013, that a review of the Strategy be launched (Decision IG.21/11), with a view to submitting a new strategy for consideration and adoption by the Contracting Parties at their 19th meeting, to be held in February 2016 in Greece. The Decision emphasizes the importance of synergies with the global Sustainable Development Goals process, in order to ensure coherence between global and Mediterranean regional objectives and targets, while allowing for regional innovation and specificities.

42. The 23rd meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols of 5-8 December 2023, Portoroz, Slovenia (COP23), mandated the Secretariat to update the 2016-2025 MSSD.

43. in order to effectively implement the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and its SDGs at the regional level, seeking to amend current unsustainable trajectories and place the region on alternative pathways to sustainability and resilience, thus accelerating the progress towards achieving Good Environmental Status¹⁷.

Assessments of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035

44. The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development draws upon the findings of four assessments carried out to inform the review process, the first focusing on implementation between 2005 and 2010, and the other ones addressing the influence of the regional strategy on national strategies for sustainable development and the implementation of the two MSSD cycles.

45. In 2009, the UNEP/MAP Secretariat carried out a review and assessment of national strategies for

¹⁷ COP23 Ministerial Declaration (UNEP/MED IG.26/L.3)

https://cop23-slovenia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/23ig26_L3_eng_portoroz-ministerial-declaration.pdf

sustainable development in the Mediterranean, in order to “provide an overall assessment of the actions and initiatives carried out so far by the Mediterranean countries for sustainable development and hence allow for a better appreciation of the state of play”. It concluded that the Strategy has played a role more at the regional level, however, it noted that the UNEP/MAP initiative to assist in the preparation of national strategies was worthwhile and had been embraced by a number of countries.

46. In 2011, an assessment of the implementation of the Strategy 2005-2015 was carried out five years after its adoption, which offered a number of useful conclusions related to the emphasis on emerging priorities, such as climate change adaptation and the green economy, on the need to elaborate tangible targets and indicators, the reinforcement of the governance framework, as well as the opportunities for synergies with other programmes, organizations and initiatives ¹⁸.
47. In addition, the assessment also reported that at a national level-the entity responsible for coordinating the formulation and implementation of sustainable development strategies faced challenges in providing leadership and cross-government support.
48. Both the 2019 MSSD Mid-Term Evaluation and the 2024 MSSD Final Evaluation concluded that the Strategy has brought concrete learnings and best practices, including the flagship initiatives, that could significantly upscale the implementation of the Strategy. The two Evaluations also recognized that additional efforts related to its monitoring, means of implementation and capacity building actions need to be undertaken to ensure reinforced impact of the Strategy at regional, national and local level, to achieve the identified targets and to deliver the SDGs. In order to tackle the gap between policy vision and implementation processes, a more effective participatory process of stakeholders is to be promoted, as well as a more operational integrated approach among the different Strategic Directions, Action and Flagship Initiatives under the same Strategy Objectives and among Objectives. Breaking down fragmentation and achieving the deep transformative changes requires better connecting SDG-14 (Life below water) with the other SDGs, and focusing on synergies between climate action and sustainable development, providing win-win solutions, and minimizing trade-offs. In particular SDG-13 (Climate Action) is a lever to achieve the SDG-14 in the Mediterranean as the region is a climate hot-spot. In addition, adaptation and mitigation actions planned by countries to strengthen the resilience of coastal and marine areas, contribute to the achievement of other Strategy objectives/SDGs, in particular SDGs 15 (Land), 6 (Water and Sanitation), 7 (Energy), 8 (Sustainable economic growth), 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), 11 (Cities and Infrastructure) and SDG 12 (Consumption and Production). Complete ownership and contribution of the Strategy by regional and national stakeholders also outside the UNEP/MAP system and partners is essential, as framework for cooperation effectively supporting the achievement of the SDGs in the region. The Strategy builds on and enhances strong and coherent interlinkages between all SDGs, thus ensuring an integrated and holistic approach that takes into account the overall integrity and inclusive approach of Agenda 2030. Financing the Strategy, improving its governance, outreach and coordination with regional and national stakeholders are also aspects that require further attention in order to ensure a concrete impact.

2.2. The Mediterranean Region

49. With its long history, its rich natural and cultural heritage, the Mediterranean Sea is a meeting point between three continents: Africa, Asia and Europe. Surrounded by 21 countries, it is the world’s largest semi-closed sea.

Rich natural and cultural resources

50. Encompassing seven marine eco-regions, 75 coastal hydrological basins, and 224 coastal administrative regions, the Mediterranean Sea occupies a basin of almost 2.6 million km², has a coastline of 46,000 km, with an average water depth of approximately 1,500 m. The riverine systems that are the main source of nutrients and their related human activities have a significant impact on the health of the Mediterranean Sea.

¹⁸ UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.358/4: <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7166.pdf>

51. The Mediterranean Sea is home to a large share of the world's marine biodiversity, but it is also the victim of decades of unsustainable use, despite the efforts for effective management. It also suffers most from the impacts of climate change, warming 20% faster than the rest of the world according to the MedECC¹⁹, thus, it holds the highest percentage of threatened marine habitats, including 21% vulnerable and 11% endangered on the EU28 Red List.
52. The Mediterranean Sea hosts a very high percentage of the world's marine biodiversity and recognized as one of the 25 top global biodiversity hotspots. The peculiar geographical setting of the sea makes it very vulnerable to various anthropogenic pressures, such as overfishing, heavy maritime traffic, and land-based pollution, including the diffusion of non-native invasive species.
53. Home to 17,000 species of fauna and flora representing respectively 7.5% and 18% of the world's marine flora and fauna, the Mediterranean Sea is a hotspot of biodiversity in an area covering less than 1 per cent of the world's oceans and less than 0.3 per cent of its volume. The species diversity of the Mediterranean, although unevenly distributed between the eastern and western basins, is higher than in most other regions of the world with a large number of endemic species and critical levels of habitat loss, due to the geological history of this sea, its close communication with the Atlantic and its position at the junction of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa which make it a melting pot of biodiversity. Non-indigenous species (NIS) are increasingly present in the Mediterranean Sea generating significant changes in the fauna and flora composition, mainly in the eastern Mediterranean²⁰.
54. The Mediterranean region is home to some of the oldest human settlements in the world giving it unique cultural heritage and cultural landscapes. This has forged, over thousands of years, strong bonds among the people of the region and given added meaning to the sense of belonging to the Mediterranean. Despite their diversity, the regional identity of the Mediterranean countries has been strengthened by centuries of commerce and communication. It is still one of the world's busiest shipping routes, that constitutes an important transit and trans-shipment area for international shipping, as well as a realm for Mediterranean seaborne traffic (movement between a Mediterranean port and a port outside the Mediterranean) and short sea shipping activities between Mediterranean ports, and hosting 17% of the world's oil tanker capacity. Despite covering less than 1% of the world's oceans, the Mediterranean Sea accounted for more than a fifth (21-22%) of global shipping activity measured by the annual number of port calls, and around 9% of the annual container port throughput in recent years²¹. Shipping contributes around 2.6% of total global greenhouse gas emissions, a figure that could more than triple by 2050. This would represent 23% growth from 2015 to 2035. Implementing and promoting the Mediterranean SOx Emission Control Area²², effective as of May 2025, engaging in the process for the designation of the Mediterranean as a whole as Nitrogen oxides emission control area (NECA), and decarbonation is crucial.

Mediterranean coastal zones: A vital interface between land and sea

55. The Mediterranean coastal zones form a crucial interface between land and sea. They have historically been densely populated, hosting extensive infrastructure and activities that have progressively intensified, leading to significant environmental impacts. As hubs for human activity, including tourism, fishing, and trade, these coastal zones are integral to the region's economy while facing pressures from urbanization and environmental degradation. These areas serve as transition zones, where the land meets the ocean, which drives changes in landforms, biodiversity, and the distribution of resources. Human activity along coasts further intensifies these land-sea interactions, impacting the balance of these sensitive regions.
56. It is estimated that approximately one third of the Mediterranean population is concentrated in its

¹⁹ MedECC 1st Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)

²⁰ 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report

²¹ 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report

²² On 15 December 2022 the 79th session of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 79) adopted the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter (Med SOx ECA), with effect from 1 May 2025, to further limit air pollution from ships, pursuant to Annex VI to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL).]

coastal regions, whereas 70% of the population lives either in cities - which are mostly coastal- or in coastal hydrological basins and 30% in rural areas knowing that rurality in the southern shore of the Mediterranean is more pronounced than in the North²³. According to Plan Bleu the Mediterranean hosts 7% of the world population corresponding to 512 million inhabitants in 2018 in the 22 riparian countries with 314 million inhabitants in the South and East and 198 million in the North. In 2021, the population of the Mediterranean countries reached 532 million, increasing by close to 20 million people in only 3 years between 2018 and 2021. It reaches 65 per cent for the southern countries of the region, with around 120 million inhabitants. The population of the riparian states grew from 276 million in 1970 to 532 million in 2021 and is predicted to reach 630 and 690 million by 2050²⁴. However, the distribution of population between the Mediterranean countries of the European Union and the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries has changed dramatically over this period: in 1960, the Southern and Eastern countries represented 41 per cent of the total population, while today this figure is 65 per cent. This population growth is associated with a significant increase of the urban population, which grew from 48 per cent in 1960 to 67 per cent in 2010 and 70% in 2020²⁵.

Socio-economic trends

57. Mediterranean countries' economy grew less than the world average between 2000 and 2017, leading to a decreasing share of the Mediterranean world's gross domestic product (GDP) in the world GDP: from 12.9% in 2000 to 11% in 2010 and 9.8% in 2017²⁶. The GDP growth rates in the south and east Mediterranean countries are higher than those of the North Mediterranean countries. However, they are considered low when compared to the population growth rates, as the demographic growth is still high in the southern Mediterranean countries. In 2021, the average income per capita in the South and East Mediterranean countries (10 000\$) is more than 4 times lower than the average income in the North Mediterranean countries (40 000\$). The share of the Mediterranean GDP in the world GDP is decreasing from 14.1% in 2000 to 12.6% in 2010, 11.3% in 2018 and 8% in 2021. This value is to be considered with attention because the GDP per inhabitant has increased since 2018 for all of the Mediterranean countries (except for Lebanon, Libya and The Syrian Arab Republic) but less than the other countries in the world²⁷. The economic growth in the Southern and Eastern countries was accompanied by significant improvements in key social indicators as represented by the Human Development Index.
58. Traditional resource-based activities (i.e. fisheries, aquaculture forestry, agriculture, and primary industries), secondary industries (e.g. shipping, food processing, housing and construction) and services (e.g. shipping and tourism) will continue to dominate economic development in the Mediterranean coastal regions. Emergent resource-based activities (i.e. marine and deep-sea mining of non-living resources, renewable energies, underwater cables and pipelines, blue biotechnology) have to be taken into account as a source for job creations but also as possible drivers of impacts on the environment. There is a need to anticipate the development of these emerging and fast-growing new activities²⁸. The potential for economic opportunities in coastal cities remains a strong attractive force, attracting populations from the hinterland and fueling immigration from often economically depressed rural areas. These new coastal cities' inhabitants will demand employment, food, water, energy, housing, and other goods and services, exerting further pressure on the coastal ecosystems and environments, and therefore presenting a substantial development challenge for the Mediterranean.
59. Within the region, poverty continues to afflict many: the Arab Forum for Environment and Development reports that it affects 65 million people in the Middle East and Northern Africa. Economic insecurity is aggravated by high unemployment rates in the general population, which increase among youth. Sharp income disparities still exist among countries, and in some cases growth figures conceal deterioration in regenerative natural capitals. That raises questions about the ability of Mediterranean economies to create the millions of new jobs projected to be required to accommodate new entrants into the labor force, while keeping current unemployment rates stable. The impacts of

²³ 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers (SoED 2020)

²⁴ MED2050 Report: Mediterranean Foresight Report for 2050

²⁵ 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers (SoED 2020)

²⁶ 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers (SoED 2020)

²⁷ MSSD dashboard indicator 3, 2023

²⁸ 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report

poverty and unemployment have contributed to social marginalization, which is further compounded by income disparities, and gives rise to social and political instability. Demands for change across the Mediterranean reveal that the mounting economic, social, and environmental strains and the implications on livelihood security have become unsustainable. In many countries it is because sustainable development planning was absent that civil and armed conflict arose. Similarly, at the regional level, current and emerging socio-economic and political challenges and their impacts remain major concerns for sustainable development.

60. Despite demographic and geopolitical challenges, human development in the Mediterranean region has generally improved over the past decade. The gap between northern and southern/eastern shores has narrowed, though it remains. Education, especially in Southern and Eastern countries, has seen significant progress, with girls' enrollment now matching or exceeding boys at all levels. However, women's participation in the workforce remains low due to work-life balance issues, gender discrimination, and sociocultural barriers. Youth unemployment is also a significant concern, often three times higher than national averages.

61. Over the past two decades, the share of agriculture and industry in GDP has declined in favor of services, which now account for over half of national GDP in many countries. Mediterranean economies still depend heavily on unsustainable material consumption and carbon emissions, despite some improvements. High import dependency, particularly for fossil fuels and cereals, combined with trade deficits and non-diversified economies, limits resilience. Government debt has also risen, exceeding 100% of GDP in one-third of Mediterranean countries, posing risks to financial sustainability and public investment in the environment. At the regional level, current and emerging socio-economic and political challenges and their impacts remain major concerns for sustainable development.

62. In recent decades, production and consumption patterns in the Mediterranean have significantly changed due to demographic growth, urbanization, and rising living standards, leading to increased resource consumption and environmental degradation. The demand for processed food, manufactured goods, and coastal tourism has contributed to food loss, packaging waste, and the depletion of vital resources like water and energy. This situation is exacerbated by inefficient industrial processes and inadequate waste management. In 2016, the Barcelona Convention's Contracting Parties adopted the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), recognizing the need to change consumption patterns to protect marine and coastal environments²⁹.

2.3. Formulating the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035

63. The preparation and update of the Strategy is a composite process that combines different interrelated steps and required the development of a number of parallel activities, including the outcome of two independent evaluation process of the status of the implementation of the Strategy for the period 2016-2025. The Strategy formulation process was inclusive and led by the members of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), its Steering Committee and the inputs provided by experts through the establishment of technical groups on Circular Economy, Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Ocean Economy/Sustainable Finance.

3. MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2026-2035: OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND ACTIONS

64. The aim of this Strategy is to provide a strategic policy framework to secure a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region and efficiently deliver SDGs at regional and national level. To this end, the rationale behind the Strategy is the need to harmonise the interactions between socio-economic and environmental goals, in line with the SDG and 2030 Agenda to adapt international commitments to regional conditions, to guide national sustainable development strategies, and to stimulate regional cooperation between stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable development. In this respect, sustainable development translates into the need to take into account environmental, social and economic goals in decision-making at all scales and across all sectors. The Strategy is underpinned by

²⁹ 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers (SoED 2020)

the conviction that investment in the environment, decarbonization, climate resilience and circular, green and blue economy is the best way to protect Mediterranean sea and coasts and secure long-term, sustainable job creation and socio-economic development, and an essential vehicle for the achievement of social and economic objectives. Education for Sustainable Development supports all the Strategy objectives as a Cross-Cutting enabler.

65. The Strategy is built around the following vision:

A prosperous, climate resilient, and peaceful Mediterranean region in which people enjoy a high quality of life and where sustainable development takes place within the carrying capacity and in the limit of acceptable change of biologically diverse healthy, productive, conserved, restored wisely used and effectively managed ecosystems.

66. This is achieved through common objectives, shared actions, strong involvement of all stakeholders, cooperation, solidarity, equity and participatory governance.

67. This vision is encapsulated in the subtitle of the Strategy, which is *'Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social well-being and economic development'*.

68. A set of guiding principles also informs the Strategy: the importance of an integrated approach to environmental and development planning; an openness to a plurality of future development models; a balanced approach to territorial development; the precautionary and polluter pays principles; and the Do No Significant Harm Principle (DNSH); a participatory approach to policy and decision-making; the management of demand in order to reduce consumptions; the importance of evidence-based policy; the reconciliation of long- and short-term for planning and evaluation (at least over a few decades); transparency, accountability and, the partnership between the UNEP/MAP system and other international and regional organizations.

69. The Strategy focuses on addressing cross-cutting issues that lie in the interface between environment and development. It is based on a set of cross-cutting themes that were chosen to provide scope for an integrated approach to address sustainability issues, as follows: Seas and coasts; Source to Sea; Natural resources, rural development and food; Water-Energy-Food -Ecosystem Nexus; Sustainable cities; Climate; Transition towards a green and blue economy; Governance.

70. The first four themes reflect a territorial approach, where complex sustainability issues can be addressed together: a concern over seas and coasts was a major outcome of Rio+20, as well as a cornerstone of the cooperation under the Barcelona Convention; the Source-to-Sea approach was highlighted in the Portoroz Ministerial Declaration of COP 23; rural areas provide a context for addressing a set of inter-related rural issues; and, cities were the theme of the Istanbul 18th Conference of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention in 2013. The four cross-cutting themes that follow are the Water-Energy-Food -Ecosystem Nexus, which is an integrated approach, very important for achieving the SDGs; climate change, which is a major sustainability issue from a global and regional perspective; the green and blue economy, which provides a key link between the environment and the economy and is a major focus of the Rio+20 Summit; and governance, which emerged during the consultation as a key issue for implementing sustainability in the Mediterranean region. These themes have been used as a basis for formulating the six objectives of the Strategy, as follows:

- 1 Address climate change with emphasis on adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority
- 2 Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems
- 3 Promote sustainable resource management, especially water, food security and systems through sustainable forms of rural development
- 4 Plan-and manage sustainable, resilient Mediterranean cities
- 5 Accelerate transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and

sustainable finance

- 6 Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.

71. These objectives correspond closely to the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations in September 2015, as indicated in Table 1 below. Nevertheless, due to the cross-cutting nature of the objectives, almost all the Sustainable Development Goals are indirectly relevant to all the Strategy's objectives.

Table 1. Linking the objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 to the Sustainable Development Goals

Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 objectives	Sustainable Development Goals
1 Address climate change with emphasis on adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority	7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all 13. Take urgent action to mitigate climate change and its impacts
2 Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems	6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
3 Promote sustainable resource management, especially water, food security and systems through sustainable forms of rural development	2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
4 Plan and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities	6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
5 Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance	8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
6 Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development	5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 objectives	Sustainable Development Goals
7. Cross-cutting sustainable development goals related to social issues	1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all 8- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

The six objectives represent the backbone of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035. Each objective covers a range of sustainability issues, as presented in Box 1:

Box 1. List of issues addressed by the six objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035
1. Address climate change with emphasis on adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority ➤ Scientific knowledge and tools on climate change not sufficiently accessible and used for decision-making ➤ The damage caused by climate change, including extreme events and long-term steady changes, increases in key vulnerable populations and economic sectors ➤ Insufficient number of adaptation plans and accompanying capacities to implement them ➤ Growing trend of greenhouse gas emissions within and beyond the energy and industry sector ➤ Slow pace in emergence of climate-friendly societies due to limited access to best available technologies and alternative development practices ➤ Climate change adaptation and mitigation costs largely unmet at national and local levels, ➤ Untapped potential of Circular economy practices and Sustainable Business Models to foster climate change mitigation/adaptation ➤ Over-reliance on public funding and state-led initiatives ➤ Need to improve the understanding on the assessment process and communication on the progress made by Mediterranean countries in implementing their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). ➤ Lack of a common Mediterranean energy strategy and need to improve energy cooperation ➤ Still poor dissemination, awareness-raising, and media communication on the issues and challenges of climate change. ➤ Disruption of water, food and energy access (WEFE nexus)
2. Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems Continued environmental degradation and increased risks from marine pollution and marine noise, including from plastic pollution and Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) ➤ Loss of biodiversity and introduction of Non-indigenous species ➤ Ecosystem fragmentation and degradation ➤ Unsustainable exploitation of living resources in ecological systems, ➤ Impacts from exploitation of non-living marine resources, including hydrocarbons ➤ Incidental catches and collisions with threatened or endangered species and/or species in bad conservation ➤ Protected sensitive or vulnerable areas at risk from insufficient spatial coverage, planning, management and funding ➤ Increased linear coastal urbanization resulting in inadequate protection and management of land, urban sprawl owing to illegal construction and gentrification of coasts, and unrestricted tourism development leading to loss of public and natural open spaces ➤ Increased coastal vulnerability to natural hazards such as flooding and erosion

3. Promote sustainable resource management, especially water, food security and systems through sustainable forms of rural development <i>Natural resources and ecosystem services</i> ➤ Loss of biodiversity and local varieties of crops and indigenous breeds from: ▪ Overexploitation or illegal use of water and other natural resources ▪ Habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, and lack of appropriate valuation ▪ Non-indigenous and invasive species ▪ Genetically modified organisms and Intensive monocultures/single-crop farming ▪ Climate change ➤ Pollution of soil, water and air and extraction of limited natural resources ➤ Degradation and fragmentation of terrestrial ecosystems, notably wetlands, forests, dunes, as well as use of non-regenerative practices Insufficient awareness of ecosystem services and their economic benefits from society, industries and policymakers, and lack of appropriate valuation ➤ Cross-border issues in the management of natural resources and livestock production <i>Rural development and food</i> ➤ Need to promote circular approaches to the use of natural resources in food production especially in the use of water for irrigation ➤ Vulnerability of small producers to economic and climatic changes and natural resource scarcity ➤ Low provision of social services and infrastructure in certain rural areas ➤ Loss of agricultural land, erosion and desertification, coupled with an expanding rural exodus ➤ Socio-economic inequalities affecting rural populations, particularly women and youth ➤ Logistical deficit at local, national and regional levels, including lack of access of local and small producers to land, water, credit, and markets ➤ Agricultural production and market controlled by large players, leaving limited access for small- scale producers and local products ➤ Loss of traditional know-how and aging farmers ➤ Insufficient collective organization and lack of participation of local communities in natural resource management ➤ Insufficient consideration of water, ecosystems, food and energy, in line with the WEF nexus approach
4. Plan and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities ➤ Urban quality of life and health degraded by traffic congestion, noise, poor air quality, inadequate supply of sanitation and increased generation of urban waste and untreated urban wastewater ➤ Resilience reduced by natural and human-induced risks, particularly those triggered by climate change ➤ Unsatisfactory urban economic and social cohesion, especially in slums and informal urban settlements, which is further increased by regional territorial imbalances, resulting in rural migration to large cities that increases urban poverty ➤ Increased demand for energy, coupled with inefficient use of energy, and low usage of renewable energy sources ➤ Degradation of historic urban areas ➤ Need to increase circularity and reuse of construction and demolition waste as well as create more robust and resilient infrastructure, and raise awareness about the dangers represented by organized crime and toxic waste ➤ Continued rise in waste generation and food waste due to growing population and increased consumption patterns ➤ Unsustainable consumption and production patterns that negatively impact energy consumption and transportation choices ➤ Low capacity of local authorities for youth sensitive, integrated forms of urban management, children and the elderly/disabled person.
5. Accelerate Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance ➤ Socio-economic inequalities between and within countries and high unemployment in particular for

youth and women

- Just Economic growth that does not take into account environmental, gender and social impacts, including living wages and fair employment conditions for all
- Unsustainable lifestyles based on high resource-consumption patterns and low recycling rates, limited consumer awareness and insufficient product information
- Insufficient education and raising-awareness policies/strategies addressed the entire society for adopting sustainable consumption patterns and understanding the benefits of recycling and circular economy
- Infrastructure limitations on existing waste management and recycling systems to handle the scale of circular economy initiatives, requiring significant investment and upgrade
- Difficult adoption of Circular Economy practices within the business and industry sector, especially for micro and small companies, due to higher initial investment costs and risk exposure
- Lack of financial incentives and policy support for businesses to adopt circular practices
- Environmentally harmful subsidies (EHS) and inefficient production facilities
- Investment flows financing unsustainable facilities and inefficient infrastructure
- Policy uncertainties increasing the risk of investments in green technologies and processes
- Need to enhance green financing instruments and appropriate-regulatory frameworks and economic mechanisms/ incentives as well as, to address the existence of harmful subsidies
- Wrong price/market signals and fiscal incentives not valuing intangible and natural capital and externalities
- Lack of reliable data to assess the environmental impacts and economic benefits of circular practices makes it challenging to promote and scale these initiatives effectively.
- Inefficient trade markets and cooperation at regional level
- Low level of regional economic competitiveness
- Lack of targeted policy measures aiming at developing sustainable business models that generate both socio-economic, gender-oriented and environmental benefits
- Lack of criteria that take due consideration of environmental, climate and in general sustainability objectives in the selection of public and private investments (green taxonomy)
- Relatively high dependence on natural resources for economic development
- Reduced incentive and weak support/guidance for young start-up researchers

6. Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development

- Poor capacities for responding to emergencies, and poor understanding of the relationship between population flows and environmental sustainability
- Lack of both human and financial resources and competences within local authorities and local communities
- Non adequate involvement of stakeholders, and consensus building mechanisms, including non-state actors' as youth and women, private sector and financial institutions
- Low level of participation and empowerment in decision-making at various levels
- Fragmentation of responsibility in different levels of governance and between sectors, and lack of decentralization
- Lack of coherence and synergies between policies at different levels of decision-making across sectors in the long-term and across borders (Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development - PCSD)
- Insufficient planning, management, implementation and monitoring of existing legal instruments
- Scientific knowledge and tools relevant for sustainable development not sufficiently accessible and used for decision- making Inadequate awareness, education, and research and innovation regarding the understanding of sustainable development challenges and opportunities
- Need to advance public trusteeship concepts in the existing instruments for better and more equitable governance and more effective and efficient public participation
- Insufficient levels of awareness among Members of National and International Parliaments of the importance of their role in fostering sustainable development practices and legislations
- Insufficiency, unavailability of scientific knowledge and data and insufficient use for better informed policy making
- Lack of coordination mechanisms and tools to ensure vertical and horizontal collaboration among different

levels of government and among different sectors

70. A set of strategic directions has been formulated for each of the six objectives of the Strategy, in order to ensure that the relevant issues are addressed. Table 2 lists the strategic directions for each objective. Due to the cross-cutting nature of the objectives, there are interlinkages between the strategic directions, and the implementation of one strategic direction may synergistically affect the implementation of another. Further strategic directions and actions have been elaborated in Chapter 3, which focuses on ensuring implementation and monitoring of the Strategy. Education for Sustainable Development is critical and is embedded cross cuttingly in the Strategy.

Table 2. Strategic directions under the objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035

Objective	Strategic direction
1. Address climate change with emphasis on adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority	1.1: Increase scientific knowledge, education, raise awareness, and develop technical capacities to deal with climate change and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems
	1.2: Accelerate the uptake of climate smart and climate resilient responses
	1.3: Leverage existing and emerging climate finance mechanisms, including international and domestic instruments, and enhance the engagement of the private and finance sectors
	1.4: Encourage institutional, policy, legal and legislative reforms and initiative for the effective mainstreaming of climate change responses into national and local development frameworks in all sectors
	1.5 Promote economy decarbonization energy transition and deployment of renewable energies
	1.6 Strengthen national and local capacities on the application of nature-based solution for climate change adaptation and mitigation
2. Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems	2.1 Strengthen implementation, compliance and monitoring with regional requirements of regulatory and policy frameworks of the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention for coastal and marine management
	2.2 Promote balanced and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources
	2.3: Promote well connected-ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures and nature-based solutions at national, transboundary and Mediterranean level and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss
3. Promote sustainable resource management, especially water, food security and systems through sustainable forms of rural development	3.1: Promote the circular/regenerative use, management and conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Natural Resources and ecosystems in the Mediterranean Region
	3.2: Promote conservation and use of indigenous or traditional plant varieties and domestic animal breeds, value traditional knowledge and practices in rural management decisions
	3.3: Promote inclusive and sustainable rural development, with a specific focus on poverty eradication, One Health, food security, women's empowerment and youth employment, including equitable and sustainable access to basic local services for rural communities
	3.4: Ensure access of local producers to distribution channels and

Objective	Strategic direction
	markets, including the tourism market
4. Plan and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities	4.1: Apply holistic and integrated spatial planning processes and other related instruments, as well as improved compliance with respective rules and regulations, to increase economic, social and territorial cohesion and reduce pressures on the environment
	4.2: Encourage inclusive urbanization and strengthen capacities for participatory and integrated human settlement planning and management
	4.3: Promote the protection and rehabilitation of historic urban areas
	4.4: Promote sustainable production, use of sustainable products and effective waste management within the context of a more circular economy, as well as foster sustainable consumption patterns among citizens
	4.5: Promote urban spatial patterns and technological options that reduce the demand for transportation, improve urban air quality and stimulate sustainable mobility and accessibility in urban areas
	4.6: Promote green infrastructures and renewable energies and improve energy efficiency to contribute towards reducing the ecological footprint of the built environment
	4.7: Enhance urban resilience in order to reduce vulnerability to risks from natural and human-induced hazards including climate change
5. Accelerate Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance	5.1: Create green, just and decent jobs for all, particularly youth and women, to eradicate poverty and enhance social inclusion
	5.2: Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, to support the shift towards circular economy approaches and sustainable business models
	5.3: Encourage innovation, public private partnerships and sustainable solutions to advance towards the objectives of a just low-carbon, circular, green and blue economy
	5.4: Promote the integration of sustainability, circularity and climate change principles and criteria on the programming and evaluation frameworks of public and private investment
	5.5: Promote an integrated financial ecosystem through a Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance aiming to foster the channeling of private and public capital into sustainable investments.
6. Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.	6.1: Enhance regional, sub-regional and cross-border dialogue and cooperation, including on emergency-preparedness
	6.2: Strengthen the role, awareness and capacities of sub-national and local governments/ municipalities and of National and Regional Parliaments for implementing national and subnational sustainable development strategies and thus contribute to the achievement of SDG and MSSD objectives
	6.3: Promote the engagement of civil society, scientists, youth and women, financial institutions, private sector, local communities and other stakeholders in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive whole of society processes and integrity in decision-making
	6.4: Promote the implementation, and monitoring of the SD Strategies at all levels of government, considering synergies and tradeoffs between different policies and sectors, including intersectional management (WEFE NEXUS) by improving policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) based on whole of government approach, inter-ministerial coordination and multi-level government
	6.5: Promote education and research for sustainable development
	6.6: Strengthen regional capabilities for information management and enhance the promotion of evidence-informed policymaking and foresight

which are accompanied by a broad indication of Responsible Actors, timeframes and indicators. Flagship initiatives are also identified, which demonstrate the vision of the Strategy in an exemplary way; these initiatives are indicative of a regional or (multi) national action that carries significant potential for results, demonstration and visibility.

72. A set of targets has also been developed for the Strategy, bearing in mind its focus on the interface between the environment and socio-economic development. The main source for the targets was the Sustainable Development Goals. The targets are summarised by objective in Table 3 below and appear in the Strategy under the relevant objective and strategic direction.

Table 3. Targets in the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035

73. The Strategy aims at contributing to an ambitious set of targets through the implementation of its flagship initiatives and actions at regional, national and local scale. Its targets are inspired by the global agenda for sustainability and SDGs of relevance for the Mediterranean Region, considering its specificities.

MSSD Objectives	Targets
1. Address climate change with emphasis on adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority	Target 1: By 2030, Contracting Parties should minimize the impact of climate change and Mediterranean Sea acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches, as well as investments on climate-resilient infrastructures, while minimizing negative and fostering positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity
	Target 2: By 2030 Contracting Parties should develop strategies that include information on climate change risks, its priorities, plans and actions to build adaptation and climate resilience
	Target 3: by 2030 Contracting Parties should develop and submit their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to contribute to limiting global warming to 1.5°C, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 43% and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050
	Target 4: By 2030, Contracting Parties will reach a minimum of 20% of renewable energy in their energy mix, by increasing the renewable energy share derived from renewable resources in total final consumption, thus encouraging shifting towards energy transition, including soil management and food systems transformation and building sectors
2. Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems	Target 5: By 2030, Contracting Parties have ratified the Barcelona Convention Protocols and the appropriate legislative measures to implement them at the national level have been already taken
	Target 6: By 2030 Good Environmental Status of marine and coastal environment is maintained and enhanced through effective implementation of Ecosystem Approach and commitment under Barcelona Convention and its Protocols
	Target 7: By 2030, at least 30 per cent of the Mediterranean Sea is protected and conserved through well connected, ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, ensuring adequate geographical balance, and sustainably managed by applying

	ecosystem-based approaches including biodiversity and climate change-informed marine spatial planning, and by conducting environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments
	Target 8: By 2030 Contracting Parties shall ensure effective implementation of the legally binding measures adopted under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols on wastewater, marine litter, plastic pollution and under IMO International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Convention and its Annexes)
3. Promote sustainable resources management, especially water, food security and systems through sustainable	Target 9: By 2030, Mediterranean Countries ensure that at least 75% of their population use safely managed drinking water services and at least 30% use safely managed sanitation in a multi-level context of water stress, competing demands and growing shortages, particularly for vulnerable populations and women. Target 10: By 2030, Mediterranean Countries ensure that at least 90% of the population has access to affordable, safe, and nutritious food all year round, through the promotion of resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems, including local supply chains
4. Plan and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities	Target 11: By 2030, all Mediterranean Countries have substantially reduced waste generation through prevention, recycling and reuse, particularly by ensuring that at least 60% of municipal solid waste is sustainably recycled, composted or managed, including separate collection and material recovery, including biowaste, with emphasis on packaging waste and on the most environmentally damaging SUP products as a priority. Target 12: By 2035, Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have adopted regulatory and policy frameworks with ambitious health-based standards for indoor and outdoor air quality in line with the World Health Organization (WHO).
5. Accelerate Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance	Target 13: By 2030, Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have in place effective regulatory and policy frameworks, including economic incentives, aimed at facilitating the development of sustainable business models that integrate circularity and eco-innovation principles in the green and blue economies, while contributing to the development of non-pollutant and socially inclusive economies, in line with the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan for the Mediterranean. Target 14: By 2035 Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have established sustainable finance frameworks that mobilize capital towards green and sustainable investments, while fostering collaboration among all stakeholders.
6. Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.	Target 15: By 2030, Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have formal mechanisms in place to ensure subsidiarity and synergies between policies at different levels of decision-making and across sectors in the long-term and across borders thus enhancing policy coherence on sustainable development (PCSD), including involvement of stakeholders. Target 16 : By 2030, ensure that all learners, including the general public, acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and

	appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
	Target 17: By 2035, Mediterranean Countries have acceded to the Aarhus Convention.

74. The Strategy takes as a given the implementation of all national, regional and international obligations relevant to the Mediterranean, even if it does not explicitly mention them.
75. The actions proposed are aimed at providing guidance and inspiration, as they summarize the opportunities for developing national actions and regional collaboration within and outside the UNEP/MAP system for the most effective implementation of the Strategy. It is understood that not all countries may have the necessity or the resources to undertake all the proposed national level actions. It may be preferable, in line with national planning procedures, to adapt the proposed actions to national needs. National actions should therefore serve as a reference framework to help countries design national policies to implement the strategic directions. For the purposes of the Strategy, which has a focus on the Mediterranean region, sub-national regional authorities are included under the term 'local authorities'.

Objective 1: Address climate change with emphasis on adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority

Vision and Actions

76. Addressing climate change is a priority for the Mediterranean. As highlighted in the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Mediterranean region, considered one of the world's major climate change hotspots, is highly vulnerable to the negative impacts of global warming.
77. Climate variability and change is already becoming increasingly evident in the Mediterranean. In recent decades, warm days and nights, heat waves, extreme precipitation and soil dryness have increased and cold days and nights have decreased. Regarding sea level rise, there are areas in the Mediterranean Sea with current average increases of more than 6 mm/year, but also with decreases of more than 4 mm/year.³² All model projections agree on the region's future warming and drying with potential huge risks and costs to the region's economy, population centres and biodiversity. More specifically, in the first MedECC Assessment Report annual average temperatures on land and sea across the Mediterranean Basin are 1.54°C higher than during pre-industrial times and they are projected to rise until 2100 by an additional 3.8 to 6.5°C for a high greenhouse gas concentration scenario and 0.5 to 2.0°C for a scenario compatible with the long-term goal of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement to keep the global temperature well below +2°C above the pre-industrial level³⁰.
78. In the near future, warm temperature extremes will increase, and heat waves will intensify in duration and peak temperatures. For 2°C of global warming above the pre-industrial value, maximum daytime temperatures in the Mediterranean will likely increase by 3.3°C. With 4°C global warming, nearly all nights will be tropical (night time temperature for at least five days above a location-dependent threshold) and there will be almost no cold days (below a location-dependent threshold) with dramatic effect on populations. Since the beginning of the 1980s, average Mediterranean Sea surface temperatures have increased throughout the basin, but with large sub-regional differences in the range between +0.29 and +0.44°C per decade, with stronger trends in the eastern basins (Adriatic, Aegean, Levantine and north-east Ionian Sea), marine heat waves have become longer and more intense.
79. Despite strong regional variations, a summer rainfall will likely be reduced by 10 to 30% in some regions, increasing existing water shortages, desertification and decreasing agricultural

³⁰ 2020 1st Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)

productivity. Aquifer recharge will be strongly impacted by warming and reduced rainfall, particularly in semi-arid areas. At current extraction rates, overexploitation of groundwater is likely to continue having a greater impact on decreasing groundwater levels than climate change³¹.

80. Depending on the extent of climatic disruption, the consequences of climate change are expected to worsen already critical situations present in the region. The Mediterranean will face an increased risk of desertification and soil degradation, sea level rise, an increase in the duration and intensity of droughts, changes in species composition, habitat losses, and agricultural and forests production losses, resulting in an increased risk of coastal erosion, infrastructure damage and threatened water and food security. Changes in climate are also affecting and modifying the composition of forest stands and mix of species that affect carbon storage and balance. Social acceptance of these changes has to be taken into account by managers in a dynamic conservation forest perspective. The Middle East and North Africa region, which already has one of the lowest water availabilities per capita world-wide, is expected to be more severely affected. These risks all have social and human impacts related to increased vulnerability, particularly for the groups already living in poor conditions. In addition, given the inherent physical characteristics of small islands, which are emblematic of the Mediterranean Sea, the Sixth Assessment Report reconfirms their high level of vulnerability to climate stressors.
81. All Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols have ratified the 2015 Paris Agreement and are officially committed to achieve global peaking and 'climate neutrality' by the second half of the century. The overall contribution of the region to global greenhouse gas emissions is low: in 2021, Mediterranean countries contributed to 1,2% of the global CO2 emissions but it varies considerably. Since 2018, CO2 emissions have decreased in most of the Mediterranean countries except Libya, Morocco, Malta, Algeria and less in Tunisia and Türkiye. The COVID-19 period contributed to reducing CO2 emissions but since 2021 the trend is again rising. In the northern Mediterranean, the CO2 emissions per capita are extremely diverse: from 1.6 tons per capita in Albania to above 5.95 tons in Slovenia, in 2021. The differences in CO2 emissions per capita are also significant in the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries: from 1.26 tons in the Syrian Arab Republic to 11 tons in Libya³² Nevertheless, carbon footprints are increasing steadily in southern Mediterranean countries as well, which highlights the need to mitigate climate change. In particular, the energy sector, accounting for 85 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in the Middle East and North Africa region³³, and the transport sector play a crucial role in mitigation efforts.
82. In the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable 2026-2035 a range of actions are recommended to address common adaptation and mitigation challenges. Other climate change-related initiatives followed, in particular the Union for the Mediterranean Expert Group on Climate Change, with a mandate to provide a multilateral and multi-stakeholder platform for exchange of information, best practices, and opportunities for cross-border cooperation.
83. However, progress towards a green, low-carbon and climate-resilient Mediterranean region remains limited and constrained by a number of issues and barriers that still need to be addressed. Scientific knowledge, data and information from research and monitoring systems remain insufficiently developed and shared. When such information resources have been developed, they are often not easily applicable in decision-making processes. Moreover, even when information is applicable, it is often not used. Awareness of the co-benefits of climate change policies for economic development is low, which hampers their implementation. Regional cooperation efforts are scattered and would benefit from better coordination. Persistent market distortions and substantial financing and technology gaps across the region limit the shift towards more climate-friendly development models, especially in the area of renewable energies and energy efficiency. In addition, public participation, the involvement of the private and finance sectors, and the capacity to benefit from international funding mechanisms need to be fostered.
84. Adapting to climate change is as important as addressing its root causes. The acknowledgement of

³¹ First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) on "Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future", MedECC, 2020

³² Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development dashboard indicator No. 21 (2023 data)

the diverse socio-economic, environmental and political contexts within individual Mediterranean countries is also critical. The Mediterranean countries need to identify and develop a country-based approach as well as a regional approach to climate change adaptation, with common regional priorities in order to benefit from a more tailored and coordinated response and to increase the resilience of the Mediterranean to climate change. This is the main purpose of the updated Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Zones (RCCAF) framework which will assist stakeholders and policy makers at all levels across the Mediterranean in order to: (i) promote appropriate institutional and policy frameworks, increase awareness and stakeholder engagement and enhance capacity building and cooperation; (ii) Identify, assess and implement best practices (including low regret measures) for effective and sustainable adaptation to climate change impacts; (iii) promote leveraging of existing and emerging finance mechanisms relevant to climate change adaptation, including international and domestic instruments; (iv) promote better informed decision-making through research and scientific cooperation and improved availability and use of reliable data, information and tools.

85. The Mediterranean region is at a crossroads with regard to climate change and development. If left unaddressed, climate change will pose a serious risk to economic growth and may jeopardize the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in most Mediterranean countries. Climate change is no longer considered an environmental or scientific issue but rather a developmental challenge that requires urgent and dynamic policy and technical responses at the regional, national and local levels. Adaptation is not only about responding directly to the impacts of climate change but also about addressing wider sources of existing vulnerabilities. Mitigation is not only about avoiding dangerous climate change but also an opportunity to re-orientate the way natural resources are used, in more sustainable directions.

Objective 1: Address climate change with emphasis on adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority		
Targets	Indicators	
	Regional	Global
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators UNEP/MAP System other indicators	Relevant Global Indicators
Target 1: By 2030, Contracting Parties should minimize the impact of climate change and Mediterranean Sea acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches, as well as investments on climate-resilient infrastructures, while minimizing negative and fostering positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity	MSSD Core indicator 6 a), Atmospheric Surface temperature; 6 b), Sea surface temperature Average marine acidity (pH) measured at agreed suite of representative sampling stations	SDG Indicator 14.3.1 Average marine acidity (pH) measured at agreed suite of representative sampling stations Target 8 Indicators of KMGBF: Component indicators Complementary indicators
Target 2, By 2030 the Contracting Parties should develop strategies that include information on climate change risks, its priorities, plans and		SDG Indicator 13.2.1 Number of countries with nationally determined contributions, long-term

Objective 1: Address climate change with emphasis on adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority		
actions to build adaptation and climate resilience		strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, as reported to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
Target 3: by 2030 Contracting Parties should develop and submit their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to contribute to limiting global warming to 1.5°C, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 43% and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050	MSSD Dashboard indicator 21, Green House Gas emissions per capita (related to GDP) MSSD Core indicator 5, Carbon dioxide emissions per capita	SDG 13, Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts Indicator 13.2.1, Number of countries with nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, as reported to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Indicator 13.2.2, Total greenhouse gas emissions per year
Target 4: By 2030, Contracting Parties will reach a minimum of 20% of renewable energy in their energy mix, by increasing the renewable energy share derived from renewable resources in total final consumption, thus encouraging shifting towards energy transition, including soil management and food systems transformation and building sectors	MSSD Dashboard Indicator 22b Renewable energy share in the total energy consumption	SDG 7, Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all Indicator 7.2.1, Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption

86. Climate change policies need to be based on sound scientific knowledge and data, coupled with awareness raising and technical capacities to ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems (strategic direction 1.1). At a national level, the Strategy focuses on the strengthening of monitoring systems and the establishment of innovative communication programmes with the cooperation of academic institutions, centres of excellence and national and intergovernmental institutions, also through dedicated education programmes and sensitization campaigns. It also emphasizes assessment and enhancing the climate change adaptation capacity of ecosystems such as coasts, wetlands and forests, as well as their mitigation services, as in the case of forests and marine areas – considering that these actions are often already available without the need for upfront investment as well as the need to support Countries in developing legal indicators for

efficient climate governance. At a regional level, the Strategy promotes a Mediterranean research agenda to be implemented through synergies, data sharing and harmonization, and regional level education through various schemes such as Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) programmes on Mediterranean climate change issues and responses. This section contains also a regional action for enhancing regional capacities for climate change monitoring and analysis through multi-country data-sharing agreements and integration of existing climate observation and early warning systems. This calls for the promotion of harmonised indicators and tools for climate change vulnerability and mitigation assessments such as climate risk analysis and adaptation planning under uncertainty, disaster risk management, climate change economic costs, as well as monitoring, reporting and verification of emissions/reductions in greenhouse gases. The flagship initiative **Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC)**, an open and independent international scientific expert network, providing information to decision-makers and the general public on the basis of available scientific information and on-going research, further focuses on the **promotion** of a regional science-policy interface mechanism, including the social and behavioral sciences, with a view to preparing consolidated regional scientific assessments and guidance on climate change trends, impacts and adaptation and mitigation option, as the **First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)**³³, the **Special Report on Climate and Environmental Coastal Risks in the Mediterranean**³⁴ and the **Special Report Interlinking climate change with the Water – Energy – Food – Ecosystems (WEFE) nexus in the Mediterranean Basin**³⁵.

Strategic Direction 1.1: Increase scientific knowledge, education, raise awareness, and develop technical capacities to deal with climate change and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
1.1.1. Upgrade, sustain and expand climate, weather and water monitoring systems.	National governments, government specialized agencies, National and Regional Parliaments regional and global institutions, academia	2030
1.1.2. Assess, communicate, protect and enhance climate change adaptation capacity of ecosystems such as coasts, wetlands and forests, as well as their mitigation services, as in the case of forests and marine areas.	National governments, government specialized agencies, National and Regional Parliaments , regional and global institutions, academia	2030
1.1.3. Establish national climate clearinghouses to ensure that the relevant knowledge, data and information reach the various types of stakeholders.	National governments, academia, regional and global institutions, private sector	2030
1.1.4. Raise public awareness through environmental education campaigns, youth events and ensure climate change is mainstreamed in the formal educational curricula, including through dedicated courses.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments , local authorities, regional and global institutions, academia, civil society, youth	2030
1.1.5. Ensure training programs for local authorities and community leaders, teachers, educational stakeholders, youth to increase knowledge on climate adaptation and resilience.	Educational Institutions, academia, schools, professional development Institutions, Environmental Education Centers	2030

³³ <https://www.medecc.org/mececc-reports/climate-and-environmental-change-in-the-mediterranean-basin-current-situation-and-risks-for-the-future-1st-mediterranean-assessment-report/>

³⁴ <https://www.medecc.org/mececc-reports/med-coastal-risks/>

³⁵ <https://www.medecc.org/mececc-reports/climate-wefe-nexus/>

Strategic Direction 1.1: Increase scientific knowledge, education, raise awareness, and develop technical capacities to deal with climate change and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
Regional		
1.1.6. Promote a Mediterranean research agenda on climate change by encouraging collaborative programmes and networking amongst research centres and universities.	Regional and global institutions, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) academia, research centres, civil society	2035
1.1.7. Enhance regional capacities for climate change monitoring and analysis through multi-country data-sharing agreements and integration of existing climate observation and early warning systems.	Regional and global institutions, PAM-CGS, academia, research centres, civil society	2030
1.1.8. Promote harmonised indicators and tools for climate change vulnerability and mitigation assessments, including climate risk analysis and adaptation planning under uncertainty, disaster risk management, climate change economic costs, as well as monitoring, reporting and verification of emissions/reductions in greenhouse gases.	Regional and global institutions, academia, specialized governmental agencies, civil society, MedECC	2030
1.1.9. Establish regional courses (promote a “Mediterranean Climate Change Literacy Program”) and diplomas; promote e-learning and massive open online course (MOOC) programmes on Mediterranean climate change issues and responses.	Regional and global institutions, academic networks, specialized governmental agencies, civil society, MedECC	2030
1.1.10. Develop legal indicators for efficient climate governance in the Mediterranean	Regional and global institutions, National and Regional Parliaments, academic networks, specialized governmental agencies, civil society	2030

87. Strategic direction 1.2 seeks acceleration in the uptake of climate-smart and climate-resilient responses that can assist in addressing climate change issues. At a national level, a key action to be undertaken is the designing, financing and implementation of national technology investment plans for climate change. At the Mediterranean level, the Strategy promotes climate change adaptation and mitigation knowledge-sharing platforms and supports mechanisms aiming at fostering collaborative R&D and innovation programmes between universities, governments and businesses, including start-ups and SMEs. This calls for the utilisation of existing structures within the UNEP/MAP system to support the dissemination of regional climate knowledge, also hosting a web-based regional climate change clearinghouse mechanism that will contain information on climate change monitoring, research, practical tools and projects. A regional action focuses on the creation of a Mediterranean Climate Technology Initiative, taking advantage of such existing initiatives at the global, European and national levels.

Strategic Direction 1.2: Accelerate the uptake of climate smart and climate resilient responses		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
1.2.1. Design, finance and implement national technology investment plans for climate change.	National governments, regional and global institutions, private sector	2030
Regional		
1.2.2. Develop regional climate change adaptation and mitigation knowledge-sharing platforms and support mechanisms aiming at fostering collaborative R&D and innovation programmes between universities, governments and businesses, including start-ups and SMEs.	Regional and global institutions, academia, civil society, private sector	2030
1.2.3. Create climate change specific funding lines on innovation open to southern and eastern Mediterranean countries under large-scale international programmes (e.g. European Union Research Programmes Climate KIC, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA))	Regional and global institutions, national governments, private sector, civil society	2030
1.2.4. Utilize existing structures within the UNEP/MAP system and its partnerships, to support the dissemination of regional climate knowledge, also hosting a web-based regional climate change clearinghouse mechanism that will contain information on climate change monitoring, research, practical tools and projects.	UNEP/MAP, regional and global institutions, civil society, MedECC, PAM	2030

88. Strategic direction 1.3 focusses on the leverage of existing and emerging climate finance mechanisms, including international and domestic instruments, and on enhancing the engagement of the private and finance sectors. Financing in support of responses to climate change issues will be mobilised through various instruments including pricing, targeted subsidies, national funds, eco-taxes, concessional interest rates, and others as appropriate, at the national level, while encouraging the shift of public and private spending and consumption habits towards green and climate-friendly practices, processes and products. New fund-raising opportunities need to be developed that advocates the legal frameworks and economic policies that incentivize green practices. Conducive legal frameworks are also required. At a regional level, the focus is on assisting countries to strengthen institutional and technical capacities to improve access to international climate funding mechanisms, including non-conventional and innovative funding, and ensure effective delivery of funds.

Strategic Direction 1.3: Leverage existing and emerging climate finance mechanisms, including international and domestic instruments, and enhance the engagement of the private and finance sectors		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		

Strategic Direction 1.3: Leverage existing and emerging climate finance mechanisms, including international and domestic instruments, and enhance the engagement of the private and finance sectors		
1.3.1. Set up suitable domestic financial instruments to finance the costs of adaptation and mitigation efforts at national level while encouraging climate-friendly investment.	National governments, local authorities, private sector	2030
1.3.2. Establish conducive legal and legislative frameworks for leveraging private sector investments and developing partnerships between public and private actors in the delivery of climate change actions.	National governments, civil society, private sector	2030
1.3.3 Capacity building for stakeholders on bonds to access climate/green and sustainable finance		2030
Regional		
1.3.4. Assist countries and relevant international organizations to strengthen institutional and technical capacities to improve access to international climate funding mechanisms, including non-conventional and innovative funding and ensure effective delivery of funds.	Regional institutions, national governments, National and Regional Parliaments	2030

89. Strategic direction 1.4 addresses mainstreaming climate change at the legislative and policy levels. It provides a particular focus on measures concerning energy and transport, and delivering sustainable no/low regret adaptation measures across all vulnerable sectors and territories such as coastal and urban areas, water management, agriculture, health, and tourism. The inclusion of climate measures into coastal policies and plans is particularly highlighted. With respect to energy, the Strategy seeks to mainstream climate change through scaling up investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy, promoting universal energy access, reforming energy subsidies, and ensuring that energy projects are assessed for their climate impact. Coordination mechanisms will be reinforced and the effective involvement of local authorities in planning and implementation will be enhanced. At the regional level, the Strategy calls for enhancing national structures and strengthening the implementation of commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as well as implementing high-level regional initiatives including the UNEP/MAP updated Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework, and other regional initiatives. The national efforts will be supported by a regional climate change knowledge and innovation centre contributing also to regional coordination and cooperation. Country-specific analysis of legal needs guided by regional climate objectives on climate change adaptation and project designed to support countries in this process, offering technical and financial assistance to strengthen legal frameworks is key to facilitate cross-border knowledge exchange and best practice sharing, allowing the region to make significant progress.

Strategic Direction 1.4: Encourage institutional, policy legal and legislative reforms and initiatives for the effective mainstreaming of climate change responses into national and local development frameworks in all sectors		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		

Strategic Direction 1.4: Encourage institutional, policy legal and legislative reforms and initiatives for the effective mainstreaming of climate change responses into national and local development frameworks in all sectors		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
1.4.1. Mainstream climate change into national legislation and policies with a focus on measures concerning energy and transport and on delivering no/low regret adaptation measures across all vulnerable sectors and territories such as coastal and urban areas, water management, agriculture, health, and tourism; introduce climate change measures into urban and coastal policies and plans.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
1.4.2. Mainstream climate change in the energy sector through scaling up investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy, promoting universal energy access and reforming energy subsidies and ensuring that energy projects are assessed for their climate impact.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2030
1.4.3. Establish designated climate change coordination mechanisms or utilize existing mechanisms within countries involving all relevant stakeholders.	National governments, local authorities, regional and international organizations, UfM, academia, civil society, private sector	2030
1.4.4. Enhance the leadership and capacity of local authorities addressing climate change issues, through twinning and capacity-building programmes and greater access to climate finance.	National governments, local authorities, regional and international organizations, academia, civil society, private sector	2030
1.4.5. Implement and monitor commitments and obligations under the UNFCCC climate agreement and its implementation mechanisms.	National governments, local authorities, civil society	2030
1.4.6. Implement high-level regional initiatives, including the UNEP/MAP Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework, and other regional initiatives as appropriate.	Regional and international organizations, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society	2030
1.4.7. Implement a country-specific analysis of legal needs guided by regional climate objectives on climate change adaptation	Regional and international organizations, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society	2030
Regional		
1.4.8. Provide policy tools and guidance through the available climate change knowledge and innovation platforms for enhancing national governance, legal and investment frameworks in terms of climate change strategies and action plans and regional coordination and cooperation.	Regional and international organizations, national governments	2030

Strategic Direction 1.4: Encourage institutional, policy legal and legislative reforms and initiatives for the effective mainstreaming of climate change responses into national and local development frameworks in all sectors		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
1.4.9. Mobilize resources and support for the development of trans-Mediterranean power grids for efficient utilization of renewable energy sources in the region, including solar energy.	Regional organizations, national governments, local authorities, private sector	2030

90. Strategic Direction 1.5 is strictly linked to Objective 5 ‘Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance’, as well as with Objective 4 ‘Plan and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities’ and Strategic Direction 4.6, Promote green infrastructures and renewable energies and improve energy efficiency, to contribute towards reducing the ecological footprint of the built environment. Related Actions under Strategic Direction 1.5 are therefore complementary. In 2021, Mediterranean countries contributed to 1,2% of the global CO₂ emissions, while the expected impacts of climate and environmental changes necessitate an accelerated energy transition in the countries of this region to enable a secure, sustainable and inclusive development.³⁶ In fact, economy decarbonization and deployment of renewable energies play a pivotal role in contributing to decline of the greenhouse gas emissions, and by leveraging on resource-efficient, low-carbon and circular economy as well as on a diverse range of renewable energy sources. At national level Action 1.5 proposes the development of country-specific cost-effective and inclusive economy decarbonisation policies and strategies/Actions Plans as well as the definition of complementary policies on reallocation of public/private sector budget/investment, long-term infrastructure planning, emissions pricing standards, as well as on labor market adaptation and related reskilling needs. The flagship initiative on delivering 1TW of renewable energy capacity in the Mediterranean by 2030 (TERAMED) stands as concrete response towards accelerating the uptake of climate-smart and climate-resilient.

Strategic Direction 1.5 Promote economy decarbonization energy transition and deployment of renewable energies		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
1.5.1 Design and deploy country-specific cost-effective and inclusive decarbonisation policies and strategies/Actions Plans, the pivotal role of green technologies, research and innovation, digitalization and Artificial Intelligence to support low-carbon economic activities	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, sub-national and local authorities	2030
1.5.2 Definition of complementary policies on reallocation of public/private sector budget/investment, Long-term infrastructure planning, carbon emissions pricing standards and regulations to enhance the cost-effectiveness of decarbonisation strategies	National governments, private sector and investors	2030
1.5.3 Development of policies and Action Plans on labor market adaptation and related reskilling needs for a low-carbon and circular economy	National governments, educational/academic institutions	2030
1.5.4 Development of policy frameworks and Plans to streamline renewable energy infrastructures and projects, including on renewable energy technologies, and catalyze private sector investments	National governments, sub-national and local authorities, private sector and investors	2030

³⁶ Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)

91. Nature-based solutions are recognised for their potential to address the threats, providing multi-purpose solutions to support ecosystem restoration and enhancement of ecosystem services to protect society against negative impacts of climate change. In March 2022, the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly adopted the Resolution UNEP/EA.5/Res.5³⁷ on the definition of nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development, while at the UNFCCC COP27, nature-based solutions emerged for their potential to address climate change. Nature-based solutions are typically stakeholder-driven and tailored to regional conditions therefore it is key to empower regional and local authorities and stakeholder communities to identify and implement them on capacity building and knowledge sharing. To this aim, Strategic Direction 1.6 focuses on the development of activities aimed at strengthening national and local capacities, while building on the exiting regional platforms and networking initiatives, including the EU Missions on adaptation to climate change and on ocean and waters.

Strategic Direction 1.6 Strengthen national and local capacities on the application of nature-based solution for climate change adaptation and mitigation		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
1.6.1 Assess the national and local capacity needs for implementing nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation	National governments, sub-national and local authorities	2030
1.6.2 National Guidelines for the development of national and local capacities for the application of nature-based solution for climate change adaptation and mitigation	National governments, sub-national and local authorities	2030
1.6.3 Promotion of trainings, educational programmes and learning platforms/hubs policies, knowledge and best practices on nature-based solution for climate change adaptation and mitigation	National governments, educational/academic institutions Environmental Education/ESD Centers	2030
Regional		
1.6.4 Support national, sub-national and local capacities to participate and set up regional and sub-regional projects, networks and Platforms on best practices exchanges on Nature-Based Solutions, taking also into account the activities and network of the EU Missions on adaptation to climate change, water and ocean and future developments	National governments, sub-national and local authorities, regional and sub regional organizations/institutions	2035

Objective 2: Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems

Vision and Actions

92. The objective focusing on healthy marine and coastal areas sits firmly and historically in the basin approach taken by MAP and the Barcelona Convention. The 1975 MAP was the first ever regional seas programme under the UNEP umbrella. The Barcelona Convention was adopted in 1976 by the Mediterranean countries and the European Community. Since then various protocols have been

³⁷ <http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39864/NATURE-BASED%20SOLUTIONS%20FOR%20SUPPORTING%20SUSTAINABLE%20DEVELOPMENT.%20English.pdf>

adopted under the Convention to help with the protection of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal regions. The protocols currently cover dumping from ships and aircraft, oil and harmful pollution emergencies, land-based pollution, specially protected areas and biological diversity, pollution from exploitation of the continental shelf, hazardous wastes and most recently, integrated coastal zone management.

93. In the last decade the Convention has actively worked on developing Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) approach and framework, recognizing it as an essential component of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).

94. The 2005 Strategy established the sea and coastal zones as one of its seven priority fields of action, deeming this priority as essential in making real progress in the sustainable development of the Mediterranean. In the years since its adoption, there have been a number of sub-regional, regional and global developments relevant to this objective, which include:

- **Higher profile for marine issues within sustainable development.** Rio+20 increased the focus on marine issues through its chapter on oceans and seas. In addition, there is increasing recognition of the role of marine areas in economic development, as the concept of the blue economy illustrates. In addition, at the Mediterranean level, the Istanbul Declaration¹⁹ contains a commitment from the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, “to make the Mediterranean an exemplary model in implementing activities effectively protecting the marine and coastal environment as well as contributing to sustainable development”.
- **The COP23 Ministerial Declaration commits the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to intensify the activities at all levels, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to a swift update of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 in order to effectively implement the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and its SDGs at the regional level, seeking to amend current unsustainable trajectories and place the region on alternative pathways to sustainability and resilience.**
- **The growing relevance of the MSSD and of the awareness of the global community and the of Contracting Parties on the importance to connect SDG-14 (Life below the Sea) with the other SDGs, particularly those with ocean-related targets. Leveraging interlinkages between Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other Goals towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supporting Governments in opening up to new and concrete opportunities to secure the sustainable long-term development of the sea³⁸. Marine Spatial Planning approach can be a concrete example of a tool that concretely enhances linkages among SDGs at national and regional level.**
- **Stronger regional policy instruments under the Barcelona Convention.** The adoption (2008) and entry into force (2011) of the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean, including the 2023 Conceptual Framework for implementing Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) recognized the importance of an integrated management approach for the sustainable development of coastal zones. In addition, since 2008 the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention committed to apply the ecosystem-based approach – through the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap – to the management of human activities while enabling a sustainable use of marine goods and services, with the view to achieving or maintaining good environmental status of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal regions, their protection and preservation, as well as preventing their subsequent deterioration.
- **Sub-regional policy development.** The European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) (2008) and the associated criteria and indicators have become applicable to European Union Member States. In addition, Maritime Spatial Planning

³⁸ https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/ID_8_Leveraging_interlinkages.pdf

(MSP) is recognised as an important tool for integrated planning. The European Union Macro Regional Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) is also being implemented at sub-regional level, with a pillar focusing especially on Blue Growth.

- **Launch of a regional process since 2008 aiming at the establishment of protected areas in the areas beyond national jurisdiction**, on the basis of joint proposals by neighbouring countries for inclusion in the List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance. The further resumed fifth session of the Intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (General Assembly resolution 72/249), adopted by consensus; the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (A/CONF.232/2023/4), recognizing that action is needed from the Mediterranean Region as a contribution to its early entry into force and the pivotal role of the Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties in this process.
- **Global recognition of Mediterranean marine areas in need of protection, including areas of national jurisdiction and deep-sea habitats and the importance of the Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs).** The 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2014 listed 15 Mediterranean areas meeting the scientific criteria for ecologically- or biologically-significant marine areas, due to issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. The 30 by 30 Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) to ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed, as well as the Target 1.4 and 1.5 of Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO).

95. Increased realization of the economic value of the open sea and the need for blue growth has promoted an increase in the exploration for and exploitation of non-living open sea resources (e.g. oil, gas) and emphasized the need for robust integrated maritime spatial planning to support sustainable development.²² Therefore the Strategy promotes the blue economy concept through strong partnerships between maritime sectors and public authorities in regard to the sustainable and equitable use of marine areas and resources. In addition, the global momentum behind assessing vulnerabilities and the impacts of climate change and delivering an effective and efficient response has grown rapidly over the last decade, leading to the increased inclusion and mainstreaming of climate change in many sectors associated with coastal and marine areas.

The strategy for marine and coastal areas rests on **three** pillars:

- **Strengthen compliance with implementation and monitoring of regional requirements and policy frameworks** of the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention **for coastal and marine management** (strategic direction 2.1)
- **Promote balanced and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources** (strategic direction 2.2)
- **Promote well connected ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures** at national and Mediterranean level and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss (**strategic direction 2.3**)

Objective 2: Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems		
Targets	Indicators	
	Regional	Global
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators UNEP/MAP System other indicators	Relevant Global Indicators
Target 5: By 2030, Contracting Parties have ratified the Barcelona Convention Protocols and the appropriate legislative measures to implement them at the national level have been already taken	MSSD Dashboard Indicator 6: Number of ratifications and level of compliance as reported by Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties	No corresponding SDGs
Target 6: By 2030 Good Environmental Status of marine and coastal environment is maintained and enhanced through effective implementation of Ecosystem Approach and commitment under Barcelona Convention and its Protocols	Indicators of: a) Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) b) Quality Status Report for the Mediterranean (MED QSR)	SDG 14, Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development Indicator 14.2.1, Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to manage marine areas
Target 7: By 2030, at least 30 per cent of the Mediterranean Sea is protected and conserved through well connected, ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, ensuring adequate geographical balance, and sustainably managed by applying ecosystem-based approaches including biodiversity and climate change-informed marine spatial planning, and by conducting environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments	MSSD Dashboard Indicator 7: Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine territorial waters MSSD Dashboard Indicator 9a: Number of protected areas participating in the Green List initiative MSSD Dashboard Indicator 10: Official development assistance and public expenditure on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems MSSD Core indicator 10 Evolution of Mediterranean protected areas and their associated surfaces % of MPAs with effective management plans in place	SDG 14, Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development Indicator 14.2.1, Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to manage marine areas SDG 15, Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss Indicator 15.5.1, Red List Index

Objective 2: Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems		
Targets	Indicators	
	Regional	Global
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators UNEP/MAP System other indicators	Relevant Global Indicators
	Protected area and OECM management effectiveness (MEPCA) indicator	
Target 8: By 2030 Contracting Parties shall ensure effective implementation of the legally binding measures adopted under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols on wastewater, marine litter, plastic pollution and under IMO International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Convention and its Annexes)	Indicator: Number of Contracting Parties that have ratified the MARPOL Convention and its Annexes	SDG 6, Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all Indicator 6.3.1, "Proportion of wastewater flows safely treated" SDG 14, Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development Indicator 14.1.1, (a) Index of coastal eutrophication; and (b) plastic debris density Indicator 14.2.1 Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to manage marine areas

96. National actions under strategic direction 2.1 include strengthening implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its protocols, with focus on the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management, national coastal conservation initiatives, and the updated Ecosystem Approach Roadmap, as well as delivery of ratified protocols through strengthened national policies and priority actions. These processes, developed in more detail in the strategic direction 6.4(Governance objective), will be supported by regional and sub-regional roadmaps for delivery of protocols and enhanced coordination, exchange of good practices, including technology and local knowledge transfer. Joint efforts will be initiated for the coastal and marine protected areas in the Mediterranean Sea, including the areas beyond national jurisdiction, as part of the wider efforts to implement the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO).

Strategic direction 2.1: Strengthen implementation, compliance and monitoring with regional requirements of regulatory and policy frameworks of the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention for coastal and marine management

Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
2.1.1. Strengthen the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and other regional policy instruments, as well as related national action plans and through enhanced prioritization and results-based management through ministries with environmental and budget portfolios and implementing line agencies.	National governments, local authorities, regional institutions, private sector, civil society	2035
2.1.2. Implement the updated Ecosystem Approach Roadmap and in synergy with the implementation of MSP, to achieve healthy marine ecosystems and conserve marine biodiversity	UNEP/MAP, national governments	2035
2.1.3. Transpose the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (where ratified) and its Action Plan into national policies and further its implementation, and implement COP 23 MSP Decision IG.26/10	National governments, local authorities, regional institutions, with the support of UNEP/MAP (PAP/RAC)	2030
2.1.4. Support national coastal conservation initiatives and strengthen or develop specific national laws for management of coastal areas, including concepts such as public trusteeships.	National governments	2030
2.1.5. Create or strengthen delivery nodes for ratified protocols through national prioritization and policy strengthening.	National governments	2030
2.1.6 Implement the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO), and its related national action plans.	SPA/RAC in cooperation with regional institutions, national governments, civil society	2030
2.1.7. Ensure All Marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs) have adaptive management plans adopted, effectively implemented and periodically reviewed	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, regional institutions, civil society	2035
Regional		
2.1.8. Improve regional and sub-regional coordination, exchange of good practices, including technology and local knowledge transfer, including through the MSP Working Group	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society, UNEP/MAP	2035
		2030

Strategic direction 2.1: Strengthen implementation, compliance and monitoring with regional requirements of regulatory and policy frameworks of the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention for coastal and marine management

Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
2.1.9 Develop and implement regional and sub- regional targeted measures and roadmaps, where lacking, for delivery of all Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in synergy with other regional policy instruments as relevant.	Regional institutions, national governments and local authorities	

97. In order to address the issues resulting from the unsustainable exploitation of living and non-living coastal and marine resources, the Strategy calls for sustainable and equitable use of marine and coastal resources. A regional advocacy towards integrated marine spatial planning, based on ecosystem approach principles, will support the implementation of the strategic direction.

Strategic direction 2.2.: Promote balanced and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources

Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
2.2.1. Promote and support the blue economy concept through strong partnership between maritime sectors and public authorities in regard to the sustainable and equitable use of marine areas and resources, including supporting the coexistence in using marine space, as promoted by COP 23 MSP Decision IG.26/10	National governments, regional institutions, UNEP-MAP	2035
2.2.2. Ensure that the necessary regulatory instruments, including strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment, national development guidelines, and exploration and extraction tender criteria are effectively in place, and amend national regulatory framework as required.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments , regional institutions	2035
2.2.3. Implement relevant legislative and policy measures to control open ocean exploitation within national and regional requirements, including liability regimes.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments , regional institutions, private sector	2035
2.2.4. Translate the Offshore Protocol (where ratified) and its Action Plan into national policies and further its implementation.	National governments, local authorities, regional institutions, with the support of UNEP/MAP (REMPEC)	2035
2.2.5. Safeguard the Mediterranean fisheries by ensuring that all fish stocks are being fished sustainably and effectively.	National governments, regional institutions	2030
Regional		

Strategic direction 2.2.: Promote balanced and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
2.2.6. Prepare a regional programme on assessment and control regarding open ocean exploration and exploitation of living and non-living resources.	Regional institutions, private sector, with support of UNEP/MAP	2030
2.2.7. Promote MSP implementation, including capacity building and sharing of best practices at regional and sub-regional level	UNEP/MAP	2030
2.2.8 Coastal resilience platform, including regional compendium of adaptation measures for coastal and marine sectors	UNEP/MAP	2030
2.2.9 Develop and implement monitoring, supported by Artificial Intelligence, to assess the overexploitation/loss of natural resources, in particular water, forests, space, sand, etc	UNEP/MAP	2030

98. Strategic Direction 2.3 focuses on the promotion of networks of ecologically protected marine and coastal areas at national and Mediterranean level, as well as the enhancement of stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss. The pressures on protected areas created by insufficient spatial coverage, planning and management processes call for, at the national level, programmes that strengthen the protection of biodiversity and the actual management of such areas. Legal or financing mechanisms accompany actions that raise awareness on the economic, social and environmental value of ecosystem services. The promotion of national and regional networking processes aims at reuniting directors and managers for enhancing the synergies of their actions. At the regional level, the Strategy supports further networking, as well as the promotion of the “Green list” standards to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of park management bodies created at the IUCN World Parks Congress, and it launches the flagship initiative on Promote the protection and conservation of Seagrass/Posidonia Meadows as crucial ecosystem.

Strategic direction 2.3: Promote well connected-ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures and nature-based solutions at national, transboundary and Mediterranean level and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
2.3.1. Promote well connected, ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures and nature-based solutions at national level	National governments, local authorities, civil society	2030
2.3.2. Establish programmes to enhance awareness among local stakeholders on the economic, social and environmental value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss for their daily lives.	National governments, local authorities, rural communities, civil society	2030

Strategic direction 2.3: Promote well connected-ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures and nature-based solutions at national, transboundary and Mediterranean level and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
2.3.3. Set up financial mechanisms (national funds, payment for ecosystem services, compensations) to support policies ensuring the provision of environmental and social services.	National governments, local authorities	2035
2.3.4. Promote Marine literacy and Education targeting coastal communities, schools, and local governance structures. Integrate sustainable fishing practices, and ecosystem restoration into educational curricula. Support community-school based marine stewardship programs for sustainable management	National governments, local authorities, educational Institutions, civil society,	2030
Regional		
2.3.5 Promote a regional network of managers of ecologically protected areas, and nature-based solutions, building on the experience of the existing initiatives	Regional Institutions	2035

Objective 3: Promote sustainable resource management, especially water, food security and systems through sustainable forms of rural development

Vision and Actions

99. Rural areas in the Mediterranean are relatively diverse in their history, culture, natural conditions, population density, settlements, economic structure, and human resources and thus require different policy interventions, but share a potential for the establishment of new bases for economic and social development.

100. When addressing the use of natural resources in rural areas, attention must be paid to the protection of terrestrial ecosystems, which provide essential goods and services for human development. Those range from food and water to medicinal plants, fuel, timber, and housing materials. The maintenance of the good status and health of those ecosystems is therefore fundamental for both biodiversity conservation and human well-being.

101. The three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity – conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources – reflect the importance of this theme. The 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and builds on the Convention's previous Strategic Plans, sets out an ambitious pathway to reach the global vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050. Among the Framework's key elements, 4 goals refer to 2050 and 23 targets tackle 2030. The intention is not only to guarantee the conservation of all biodiversity components, but also to address key socioeconomic aspects, such as poverty reduction, sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and forestry, the needs of women and local communities, traditional knowledge, and public participation.

102. In the northern Mediterranean countries, there has been agricultural and pastoral land abandonment and reforestation campaigns have been effective, while in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries the pressures on ecosystems remain strong, particularly in North African countries because of the high population pressure on land and water resources, urban sprawl,

over-exploitation of forests and overgrazing; in addition, desertification processes are exacerbated by climate change, causing increased aridity and extreme events (long periods of drought, devastating floods of land and livestock, large cold spells), with strong socio-economic impacts on farmers. In this context, food cooperation among Mediterranean countries is also a main issue as regards the situation of the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries and the existing complementarities between the North and the South.

103. The Mediterranean agri-food sector consumes significant rural resources and constitutes one of the main drivers of environmental degradation through processes such as desertification of marginal lands and pollution run-off from farming and industry. At the same time the sector is a key player in the conservation of the Mediterranean agricultural landscape and in providing livelihoods and employment. The sustainable management of natural resources, rural development and food production and security are interdependent aspects that ensure the well-being of rural communities and provide significant inputs to downstream industries, from food processing to tourism.
104. All around the Mediterranean's rural areas, and food security are of paramount importance. Given the importance of small and medium-sized farms in the rural areas of the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries and their mobilization of the family workforce, family farms contribute to food security of farm households and local communities by the supply of domestic markets. Furthermore, the intra-family and intergenerational solidarity prevailing in farm households contribute significantly to the fight against food insecurity and social vulnerability of rural populations. However, access to land is increasingly open to foreign capital and investors without much consideration of the effects on agricultural and rural societies at the local level. The southern and eastern Mediterranean countries are also vulnerable to changes in international agricultural prices due to their high dependence on cereal imports. This context makes agricultural and food security issues particularly sensitive.
105. Furthermore, since the impacts of climate change are likely to include the degradation of agricultural water resources and loss of fertile soils, ensuring food security and rural vitality by adapting agriculture to climate change is also necessary. Indeed, small farmers will be directly affected by these impacts, which represent risks in terms of the stability of rural areas. This calls for adaptation strategies and services for agricultural and rural areas, as well as public and private support for those adaptations, such as promotion of agri-environmental practices, alternative agricultural methods, crop diversification, controlling and limiting use of genetically modified organisms, and conservation of water and soil, limiting the consumption of such natural resources.

Objective 3: Promote sustainable resource management, especially water, food security and systems through sustainable forms of rural development		
Targets	Indicators	
	Regional	Global
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators UNEP/MAP System other indicators	Relevant Global Indicators
Target 9: By 2030, Mediterranean Countries ensure that at least 75% of their population use safely managed drinking water services and at least 30% use safely managed sanitation in a multi-level context of water stress, competing demands and growing shortages, particularly for vulnerable populations and women	MSSD Dashboard indicator 14: Proportion of population (in %) using safely managed drinking water service MSSD Core indicator 7 a) Water withdrawal per inhabitant; b) Renewable freshwater resources per capita MSSD Core indicator 8, Plastic leakages at sea	SDG 6, Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all Indicator 6.1.1, Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services Indicator 6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water Indicator 6.4.2 Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources
Target 10: By 2030, Mediterranean Countries ensure that at least 90% of the population has access to affordable, safe, and nutritious food all year round, through the promotion of resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems, including local supply chains	MSSD Dashboard Indicator 11: Global Food Security Index	SDG 2, End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture Indicator 2.1.2 Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)

106. The Strategy underlines the need for compliance of national legal measures with international and regional commitments to promote the sustainable use, management and conservation of natural resources and ecosystems (strategic direction 3.1). It calls for effective and participatory management of protected areas and exploitation of renewable natural resources for a regulated development in rural areas, including through Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and permitting processes. The Strategy aims to address the limits to sustainable rural development caused by the unsustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem goods and services, particularly energy, food and water, through improving efficiency. The

Strategy takes into consideration that the UN General Assembly recognized in 2010, through Resolution 64/292, the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights. An improved forests management is equality tackled, both at national and regional level, while water desalinization and natural resources reuse approaches and plans are included. The Flagship initiatives Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus (WEFE Nexus) in the Mediterranean Source to Sea continuum and the Mediterranean Forest Initiative will concretely support these approaches. The Strategy recommends institutional and legal reforms fostering water cooperation programmes among sectors and cross-borders. The Strategy also suggests adopting policies, regulatory measures and instruments for sustainable exploitation of non-renewable resources and related post-extraction restoration.

Strategic direction 3.1: Promote the circular/regenerative use, management and conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Natural Resources and ecosystems in the Mediterranean Region

Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
3.1.1. Ensure that legal measures are in place to conserve/restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in line with international and regional commitments.	National governments, civil society	2035
3.1.2. Ensure Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and permitting processes are implemented to support the development in rural areas, as well as monitoring and adaptive management of interventions.	National governments, local authorities, regional institutions, civil society, private sector	2035
3.1.3. Put in place participative cross-sectoral resource management strategies to ensure that renewable natural resources are extracted in ways that do not threaten the future use of the resources, and without exceeding their maximum sustainable yield.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
3.1.4. Achieve a sustainable balance between production of food, use of water and use of energy, through improving energy and water use efficiency, promoting the use of renewable energy sources, as well as through the introduction of institutional and legal reforms.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
3.1.5. Develop socio-economic models for national strategic choices for water allocation between agriculture, industry, tourism, and domestic uses, taking into account environmental and social aspects, as well as One Health initiatives and economic development needs.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, Private sector	2035
3.1.6. Ensure that extraction and management of non-renewable resources are carried out in ways that minimize environmental impacts, and that permitting systems include post-extraction restoration.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035

Strategic direction 3.1: Promote the circular/regenerative use, management and conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Natural Resources and ecosystems in the Mediterranean Region		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
3.1.7. Develop action plans for the restoration of land from extractive activities.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
3.1.8. Secure, in a climate change context, water supply considering the development of nonconventional resources such as reuse and desalination withdrawal and also promotion of sobriety in conventional water uses	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2030
3.1.9. Ensure that forests are managed in a sustainable way to allow managers to benefit from goods & services (cultural, regulation, supply) they provide including social consideration (acceptance) of forest stands evolution due to climate change	National governments, local authorities	2035
3.1.10 Develop national plans / strategies to secure means and better prevent fires but also dieback and desertification of the Mediterranean Basin	National governments, local authorities	2030
Regional		
3.1.11. Develop or strengthen cross border water cooperation programmes and networks	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
3.1.12. Strengthen regional plans on reuse and desalination making them more sustainable, in particular regarding brines discharges and CO2 emissions and renewable energy sources for desalination production	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, private sector	2035
3.1.13 Harmonize a monitoring system and assessment programme for a more sustainable management of forests	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities	2035

107. The Strategy aims to promote conservation and use of indigenous or traditional plant varieties and domestic animal breeds, as well as to value traditional knowledge and practices in rural management decisions (strategic direction 3.2). It calls for establishing national seed banks and knowledge repositories and encourages them to engage in regional collaboration. It promotes the valorisation of traditional knowledge and land races, emphasizing the need for supporting their integration in education and training for rural and agricultural practices.

Strategic direction 3.2: Promote conservation and use of indigenous or traditional plant varieties and domestic animal breeds, value traditional knowledge and practices in rural management decisions		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
3.2.1. Establish national seed banks and knowledge repositories of indigenous or traditional plant varieties and domestic animal breeds.	National governments, local authorities, agricultural associations and cooperatives, civil society, academia, private sector	2030
3.2.2. Support the integration of traditional knowledge in education and training for rural and agricultural practices at national level.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, academia, private sector	2035
3.2.3. Promote the valorisation of traditional knowledge in rural development funding programmes.	National governments, local authorities, donor agencies	2035
3.2.4. Integrate Sustainable Agricultural Practices and Land Stewardship in education programs at a formal and non-formal level. Emphasize soil conservation, water management, and sustainable crop techniques in school education and strengthen collaboration between various actors	National government, educational institutions, environmental education centers, academia, civil society	2035
Regional		
3.2.5. Establish regional collaboration between seed banks and knowledge repositories around the Mediterranean.	Regional institutions, civil society	2035

108. The Strategy addresses the social and environmental consequences created by inequalities affecting rural populations, particularly women and youth, by developing skills and opportunities through participatory rural development programmes that take into account traditional knowledge, skills and crafts in order to add value to rural territories and local cultural assets. Strategic direction 3.3 promotes inclusive and sustainable rural development, with a specific focus on poverty eradication. At a national level, policy measures and fiscal arrangements should encourage rural multi-functionality, coupling tourism and agriculture, benefiting to women's empowerment and youth employment. Such actions should also lead to equitable and sustainable access to basic local services for rural communities. A regional action focuses on international partnerships and networks to build capacity in the promotion of traditional knowledge, skills and crafts, as well as the establishment of capacity development programmes for local communities.

Strategic direction 3.3: Promote inclusive and sustainable rural development, with a specific focus on poverty eradication, One Health, food security, women's empowerment and youth employment, including equitable and sustainable access to basic local services for rural communities		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
3.3.1. Develop participatory rural development programmes and adapt measures and fiscal arrangements to encourage rural pluriactivity and sustainable economic development of vulnerable rural communities, particularly for the benefit of women and youth, taking into account also the vulnerability of such communities to natural and human-induced hazards, which recognise the multi-functionality of rural areas.	National governments	2035
3.3.2. Develop training programmes and businesses to encourage the reviving of traditional skills, arts and crafts in view of the protection and preservation of the local cultural as well as a means to establish economic activities locally.	National governments	2030
3.3.3. Prepare action plans to support the development of rural tourism that will alleviate overcrowding in coastal cities and resorts, stimulate the utilization of locally produced products and generate local employment opportunities.	National governments	2030
Regional		
3.3.4. Develop regional/sub-regional partnerships and networks to build capacity in the promotion of traditional knowledge, skills and crafts, as well as establishment of capacity development programmes for local communities.	Regional institutions	2035

109. In order to ensure an equitable access of local producers and small-scale farmers to distribution channels and markets, including the tourism market (strategic direction 3.4) national programmes supporting agro-ecological and organic technologies will add value to local assets, products, and processes. This will be achieved through the use of innovative products and processes, cooperation schemes, market instruments, marketing plans, and labelling schemes. The Strategy focuses on the added-value of organic, labelled, and conservation agriculture, while controlling and limiting the use of genetically modified organisms. On the demand side, awareness-raising campaigns will be developed in order to sensitise consumers regarding local economic benefits.

Strategic direction 3.4: Ensure access of local producers to distribution channels and markets, including the tourism market		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
3.4.1. Undertake actions to improve access of small-scale producers to markets, including tourism markets, through the use of innovative products and processes, cooperation schemes, market instruments, marketing plans and labelling schemes.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, local cooperatives	2030
3.4.2. Undertake initiatives to raise awareness on environmental, economic and social benefits of consuming local products, including in the tourism sector.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, civil society, local cooperatives	2030
3.4.3. Develop and strengthen agriculture based on agro-ecological and organic technologies, including organic, labelled, and conservation agricultures, controlling and limiting the use of genetically modified organisms, with special support to small-scale farmers.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, rural communities, local cooperatives, private sector	2030

Objective 4: Plan and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities

Vision and Actions

110. While the SDGs are global in their ambition, their achievement will depend on the ability to transform them into reality at local level. With at least 65 per cent of SDG targets linked to the work and mandates of local and regional governments³⁹ the localization of the SDGs and a multilevel governance approach is a key accelerator for the 2030 Agenda implementation⁴⁰.
111. Although affected by the economic crisis, the urbanization of the Mediterranean population continues at a fast pace, in particular along its southern shores. Two in every three people are already living in the urban areas of Mediterranean countries, which is higher than the world average.
112. By around 2050, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme predicts that the urban population will grow to around 170 million in the countries on the northern shore (140 million in 2005) and to over 300 million to the south and east (151 million in 2005). This fact generates serious challenges: for example, by 2030 some 42 million additional dwellings will be required, mainly in cities.²⁸ In addition, notwithstanding, most Mediterranean cities, in particular those located on the coast, are not currently being managed sustainably, particularly in relation to the carrying capacity of those coasts. They are insufficiently resilient in terms of coping with natural and human-made risks and hazards, including climate change and the increasing level of risks due to climate change impacts mainly flooding and storm surges. At the same time, the potential of cities as drivers of innovative and sustainable social and economic change is insufficiently recognized. Cities have the potential to be laboratories to test and successfully apply engineering to adapt to climate change impacts, i.e. green infrastructure and Nature based Solutions (NbS) to adapt to "urban heat island effect"; development of green - parks - and blue rivers corridors to generate coolness; design and architecture of buildings to use the effect of wind and increase natural coolness.
113. Mediterranean cities are insufficiently resilient in terms of coping with natural and human-made risks and hazards, including climate change. They are also highly energy-dependent, with low shares of renewable energy used, and their productive capacity in terms of renewable energy, urban agriculture and waste recycling is highly underutilized. Waste generation in the region has grown over the last decade, mostly due to a growing population and increased consumption. Waste management needs significant improvement: while three-quarters of waste is collected, most is disposed of in open dumps, which have negative health and environmental impacts. In 2020, the recycling rate is also widely varying. In the northern countries, the recycling rate rises to 46% in Slovenia, except in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a rate close to 0 (the rate for Israel is 25%). France, Italy and Greece are around 20 to 25%. Croatia, Spain and Cyprus are around 10-17%. Algeria, Lebanon, Malta, Montenegro, Monaco and Morocco are around 5 to 10% (MSSD dashboard indicator 20; 2023). In the Mediterranean, E-Wastes and hazardous wastes respectively represent 8 billion tons and 28 billion tons.⁴¹ In addition, the participation of residents in decision-making on urban matters in many sub-national and local governments/ municipalities remains low, as does the level of access to urban services.
114. Urban growth prospects in the Mediterranean cities point towards an exacerbation of the current challenges: excessive land uptake; more rapid degradation of architectural heritage; aquifer pollution; inefficient and untreated waste management; atmospheric air pollution and noise; and the cumulative effect of all these factors on the environment and on human health. On this basis, if

³⁹ UN, Inter-agency Policy Briefs on Accelerating Progress on the 2030 Agenda from Local to Global levels: The Critical Importance of SDG Localization, July 2024

⁴⁰ UN-Habitat, Multi governance for SDGs localization, December 2022

⁴¹ 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers (SoED 2020)

actions and initiatives aimed at correcting the impacts of urban territorial, environmental, economic and social imbalances are not taken, Mediterranean societies and ecosystems may suffer serious consequences, particularly in combination with the expected impacts of climate variability and change. Those are likely to impact most strongly the coastal zones of the Mediterranean, where the majority of the population lives in cities and in particular within the LEAC which are prone to coastal flooding.

115. Sound policies in favor of social and territorial cohesion in rural areas, which are addressed under Objective 3, are also necessary for ensuring sustainable urban development. Urban sustainability is linked to food security and sustainable forms of rural development: poor rural conditions have strong social and political impacts also on cities, as urban areas are largely populated by rural migrants.
116. Cities are critical for sustainable development in the Mediterranean, because they are engines of economic development, innovation and creativity: the climate friendly cities agenda is an example of the potential of urban areas to contribute to sustainability. For those reasons, a new, sustainable and creative approach to planning and managing Mediterranean urban agglomerations, offering longer- term sustainable solutions, and building on common aspirations and understandings among the relevant stakeholders, is the best hope for the Mediterranean cities' future.
117. Urban green and blue areas in the city have a multitude of positive environmental and socio-cultural functions: mitigating environmental pressures, improving aesthetics, reducing the urban heat island effect, mitigating flooding, and providing direct or indirect urban ecosystem services. Urban green and blue areas, or 'green and blue infrastructures' are networks of natural and engineered ecological systems providing a diverse range of services to increase the resilience of urban systems. While the simple addition of a green area could have a minor effect on the global city sustainability, and a park planned in an inaccessible area would not satisfy the needs of citizens, while requiring many resources to be managed, the same park could acquire greater value if its resultant overall potential ecosystem services (including water management) are taken into account. Several urban best management practices can be applied in Mediterranean cities. Moreover, urban regeneration projects and new urban settlements may also be planned and designed on the basis of urban best management practices related to multifunctional green and blue infrastructure. This will contribute to the transition to environments which are more resilient to changing future conditions.

Objective 4: Plan and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities		
Targets	Indicators	
	Regional	Global
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators UNEP/MAP System other indicators	Relevant Global Indicators
Target 11: By 2030, all Mediterranean Countries have substantially reduced waste generation through prevention, recycling and reuse, particularly by ensuring that at least 60% of municipal solid waste is sustainably recycled, composted or managed, including separate collection and material recovery, including biowaste, with emphasis on packaging waste and on the most environmentally damaging SUP products as a priority.	MSSD Dashboard Indicator 20 Waste generated and treated by type of waste and treatment type National recycling rate, tons of material recycled	SDG 11, Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Indicator 11.6.1, Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities out of total municipal waste generated, by cities SDG 12, Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns Indicator 12.5.1, National recycling rate, tons of material recycled
Target 12: By 2035, Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have adopted regulatory and policy frameworks with ambitious health-based standards for indoor and outdoor air quality in line with the World Health Organization (WHO).	MSSD Core indicator 9 Air quality: a) concentration of PM2.5; b) carbon monoxide emission	SDG 11, Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Indicator 11.6.2, Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted)

118. The Strategy addresses pressures on the environment caused by urban sprawl, particularly in coastal areas, where in some cases triggered by tourism development (strategic direction 4.1). The proposed solutions include strengthening the development of small and medium sized towns as focal points for sustainable regional development, and monitoring and control of coastal urbanization and encroachment. The Strategy underlines the need for strong regulations and tools for spatial planning and tourism. It calls for the promotion of blue and green infrastructure, safe and green public open spaces, which will provide urban ecosystem services that will contribute to improved resilience to climate change and variability. This requires use of spatial planning systems, capacity building and sharing of best practices at the national level, as well as the preparation of regional guidelines for planning multi-functional green and blue infrastructures in the Mediterranean. A flagship initiative promotes and implements the “Environment Friendly City” Award, as per Decision IG.22/19 by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP19 Athens Greece, 9-12 February 2016), complemented by the flagship initiative Mediterranean Network of Zero Net Cities.

Strategic direction 4.1: Apply holistic and integrated spatial planning processes and other related instruments, as well as improved compliance with respective rules and regulations, to increase economic, social and territorial cohesion and reduce pressures on the environment		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
4.1.1. Utilize spatial planning systems and land management instruments for sustainable urban/coastal planning and balanced development in urban areas that incorporate measures for infrastructure provision, and land-take reduction where possible, as well as the provision of multifunctional urban green and blue infrastructures, which provide urban ecosystem services that are also important for climate change adaptation.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities	2030
4.1.2. Ensure that legally binding instruments for tourism development are put in place for those areas that suffer from tourism pressures, and related real-estate expansion and coastal deterioration.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, planning authorities	2030
4.1.3. Strengthen small and medium- sized towns as focal points for regional development that will reduce population pressures on urban agglomerations, including by ensuring appropriate transport links from major urban centres to medium and small ones.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society	2030
4.1.4. Promote the protection, upgrading and creation of additional public open space that is safe, green and shady, and part of a network of green infrastructure.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society	2035
Regional		
4.1.5. Monitor coastal urbanization and encroachment at regional level and provide monitoring support to national and local authorities.	Regional and international institutions, national governments, local authorities, planning authorities	2035
4.1.6. Establish a regional process to build capacity and share good practices on improving compliance with spatial planning regulations.	Regional and international institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society	2030
4.1.7. Set up a process to prepare regional guidelines for planning multifunctional nature-based solutions, green and blue infrastructures, and provide opportunities for exchange of related urban best management practices.	Regional and international institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
4.1.8. Identify Mediterranean urban biodiversity hotspots and share experiences on their protection.	International and regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society	2030

119. The Strategy promotes participation of urban populations in planning and decision-making to support sustainable urban planning and management (strategic direction 4.2). In this respect securing the flow of information and enhancing capacities for participation are key. At the national level, participatory mechanisms will be established, and governance regimes put in place that allow urban jurisdictions to regulate, register and manage land, within a rights-based framework. In addition, planning measures will support the development of urban models upgrading informal settlements within the urban fabric through forward-looking territorial planning. Regional networks of cities will be developed or strengthened, and a sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean (flagship initiative) will be developed in cooperation with these networks. This will help as to ensure that Mediterranean cities are planned cities to be inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Strategic direction 4.2: Encourage inclusive urbanization and strengthen capacities for participatory and integrated human settlement planning and management		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
4.2.1. Strengthen urban governance by establishing communication and participatory mechanisms to enhance urban stakeholders' involvement and engagement in decision-making.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil Society private sector	2035
4.2.2. Upgrade informal settlements into cities and anticipate the expected rates of urban growth through more balanced territorial planning and the provision of decent and affordable housing.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society	2035
4.2.3. Put in place governance regimes that allow urban jurisdictions to regulate, register and manage land, within a rights-based framework.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society	2035
Regional		
4.2.4. Develop or strengthen regional networking and partnership programmes and regional/sub/regional projects between cities and at the city-region level around the Mediterranean to promote knowledge- sharing and capacity building on sustainable cities.	Regional and international institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society	2035

120. The Strategy focuses on the protection and rehabilitation of historic urban centres as a means to retain population and economic activity, against the trend of increased dereliction and marginalization, based on fiscal and planning incentives (strategic direction 4.3). It also focuses on creating opportunities to strengthen local distinctive character both in planning and in project development in order to enhance local attractiveness. This recognises that retaining the distinctiveness of territories has a potential for economic development and competitive advantage. The Strategy recommends developing or strengthening existing networks of historic cities, involving economic players, including the tourism sector and that representing traditional industries. In addition adequate social dwelling provision coupled with fiscal incentives and the rehabilitation of historic centres could enhance the attractiveness of the historic stock in comparison with peripheral urban expansions. At a regional level, networking between historic centres and connecting them to economic activities are promoted as a means to secure viability

Strategic direction 4.3: Promote the protection and rehabilitation of historic urban areas		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
4.3.1. Utilize forms of integrated and sustainable rehabilitation of historic urban centres, building on good practices to maintain the population in historic centres.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2030
4.3.2. Provide fiscal and planning incentives to utilize and rehabilitate historic urban centres.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities	2030
4.3.3. Create opportunities to strengthen local distinctive character both in planning and in project development in order to enhance local attractiveness, as a tool for economic development and enhancing competitive advantage.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities	2035
4.3.4. Provide adequate social housing coupled with fiscal incentives and the rehabilitation of historic centres to enhance the attractiveness of the historic housing stock in comparison with peripheral urban expansions.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities	2030
Regional		
4.3.5. Develop or strengthen existing networks of historic cities in the Mediterranean, involving economic players, including the tourism sector and that representing traditional industries.	International and regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2030

121. Solid and liquid waste production and management remain major concerns in many urban regions in the Mediterranean (strategic direction 4.4). The Strategy promotes national measures for implementing innovative waste management solutions, in line with the waste hierarchy: prevention, reduction, reuse, sorting, recycling, recovery, and, as the least preferred option, disposal. It is also a priority to foster sustainable consumption patterns among citizens and develop behavioral change schemes that will lead to reduction in waste volumes and to develop legal and financial frameworks to support sustainable waste management. At the regional level, an assessment of the effectiveness high-tech and low-tech solutions (flagship initiative), including but not limited to awareness-raising and economic measures that have been implemented, will be carried out with a view to their more widespread utilization in waste reduction efforts. Finally, the Strategy also includes a regional action to develop a database of generated and treated waste and related material flows.

Strategic direction 4.4: Promote sustainable production, use of sustainable products and effective waste management within the context of a more circular economy, as well as foster sustainable consumption patterns among citizens		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
4.4.1. Implement innovative, integrated and sustainable production, use of sustainable products and efficient waste management solutions, in line with the life cycle assessment, extended producer responsibility and waste hierarchy: prevention, reduction, reuse, sorting, recycling, recovery, and disposal.	National governments, local authorities/municipalities, civil society, private sector	2035
4.4.2. Develop schemes to encourage and educate local communities to change their behavior with regard to the use of products and waste, and raise awareness on consumption patterns	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
4.4.3. Develop legal and financial frameworks for sustainable production and waste management.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
4.4.4. Embed Sustainable Urban Planning and Green Building awareness in School and VET Education Programs and Curricula. Promote education on sustainable transport, green infrastructure, and energy-efficient urban design. Encourage schools and community involvement in sustainable city planning initiatives.	National governments, Educational Institutions, Academia, VET Institutions, Environmental Education Centers, local authorities	2030
Regional		
4.4.5. Develop robust database of generated and treaded waste and related material flows.	Regional organizations, national governments	2030

122. Many Mediterranean cities have increased their dependence on private vehicles, an increase that is further aggravated by urban sprawl, leading to pollution, congestion, high economic and social costs and land sealing for traffic management and parking. The Strategy, under strategic direction 4.5, calls for a reduced dependence on private vehicles by developing efficient integrated public transport systems between coastal cities and their functional regions. It recommends also to anticipate future transport needs, to be provided mainly by collective forms of transport, accompanied by economic and regulatory instruments, and increase virtual connectivity. At the regional level, the development of a sustainable transport and mobility framework for the Mediterranean is included.

Strategic direction 4.5: Promote urban spatial patterns and technological options that reduce the demand for transportation, improve urban air quality and stimulate sustainable mobility and accessibility in urban areas		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
4.5.1. Redesigning transportation offer by promoting alternatives to individual cars, put in place spatial planning provisions that reduce the need for personal private mobility, and improve urban air quality	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
4.5.2. Reduce urban traffic congestion and pollution through economic and regulatory instruments promoting low- pollution collective transport systems at the local urban level, maritime public transport (blue ways), multi-modal links, and more sustainable freight transport.	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
4.5.3. Increase virtual connectivity at least to basic services in order to reduce the need to travel.	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
Regional		
4.5.4. Develop a sustainable Mediterranean transport and mobility framework, taking into account the objectives of the European Union transport policy and other relevant regional initiatives, including guidelines for compact cities, in order to minimize transport and service delivery costs and improve urban air quality.	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society	2035

123. The Strategy promotes green buildings, including the retrofitting of the existing building stock, alternative building materials, reshaping housing organization patterns to contribute towards reducing the ecological footprint of the built environment (strategic direction 4.6). At a national level, various instruments are to be put in place to construct green buildings and retrofit existing buildings (e.g. institutional and legal arrangements, strategies, support schemes, training programmes, and standards). At a regional level, the Strategy focuses on the development of regional standards, certification and quality frameworks to encourage green buildings suitable for the Mediterranean climate. These regional standards and frameworks will provide guidance to national level efforts to encourage green buildings suitable for the local environment.

Strategic direction 4.6: Promote green infrastructures and renewable energies and improve energy efficiency to contribute towards reducing the ecological footprint of the built environment		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
4.6.1. Put in place institutional and legal arrangements, strategies, support schemes, training programmes and standards to construct green buildings, retrofit existing buildings and improve energy efficiency	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, civil society, private sector, professional associations (architects, civil engineers)	2030
4.6.2 Ensure green transitions for cities in terms of using alternative building materials, reshaping housing organization patterns with regards to Nature based solutions (NBS) and improve energy efficiency	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector, professional associations (architects, civil engineers)	2035
Regional		
4.6.3. Develop regional/sub-regional standards, certification and quality frameworks to encourage green and improved energy efficiency buildings suitable for the Mediterranean climate.	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector, professional associations	2035

124. Urban areas, particularly those situated close to the coast, are vulnerable to natural and human-induced disasters and large-scale changes, including climate change. Strategic direction 4.7 focuses on enhancing urban resilience, in order to reduce their vulnerability to risks from natural and human-induced hazards including climate change. Besides the regional measures relating to emergency- preparedness, the Strategy also highlights a number of actions required to be undertaken by cities with regard to resilience. At a national level, climate proofing is addressed in the implementation of programmes increasing urban resilience. National guidelines for planning of green and blue infrastructure will be prepared, which will also support urban level climate change adaptation plans. The third national action involves the preparation and implementation of action plans to improve urban resilience to natural and human induced risks, including through natural solutions, smart development and awareness-raising. A fourth national action focuses on undertaking a set of integrated measures to support the productivity of cities in terms of energy production, composting and urban and peri-urban agriculture, including through the recognition of such activities as urban land uses and economic activities, ensuring that necessary health safeguards are in place. At the regional level, the Strategy calls for an inventory of local authorities in the region which are developing natural risk response mechanisms.

Strategic direction 4.7: Enhance urban resilience in order to reduce vulnerability to risks from natural and human-induced hazards including climate change		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
4.7.1. Ensure urban spatial plans are subject to climate proofing.	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
4.7.2. Develop national guidelines for auditing and planning of green and blue infrastructure, with reference to natural and human-induced risks, including climate change.	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, private sector, civil society	2035

4.7.3. Prepare and implement action plans, based on prevention, preparedness and response approaches, to improve urban resilience to natural and human induced risks, including through natural solutions, smart development and awareness-raising.	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, civil society	2035
4.7.4. Undertake a set of integrated measures to support the productivity of cities in terms of energy production, composting and urban and peri-urban agriculture, including through the recognition of such activities as urban land uses and economic activities, while ensuring that necessary environmental health safeguards are in place.	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
Regional		
4.7.5. Set up an inventory of Mediterranean local authorities developing natural risk response mechanisms, including climate change adaptation actions and relevant good practices.	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society	2030

Objective 5: Accelerate transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance

Vision and Actions

125. The green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication has attracted much attention from the international community at a time when the financial crisis, geo politic developments and climate change impacts are seriously affecting socio-economic development. A green economy – called blue economy when applied to the coastal, marine and maritime sectors of the Mediterranean – is one that promotes sustainable development whilst improving human well-being and social equity, and significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. In other words, a green economy promotes resilient, low-carbon, resource-efficient and socially inclusive economic development.

126. The circular economy offers a transformative approach that prioritizes the continual reduction, reuse, refurbishment, and recycling of products and materials. A circular economy in the blue and green sectors refers to a sustainable economic framework that integrates ecological principles into economic activities, emphasizing the responsible use of natural resources, minimizing waste, and fostering regeneration. In the blue economy, this involves sustainable practices in marine and aquatic systems, ensuring that fishery and marine resource extraction is done responsibly to protect ocean health. In the green economy, it encompasses land-based systems where agricultural practices, renewable energy sources, and resource management prioritize environmental restoration, biodiversity, and carbon footprint reduction.

127. Together, these approaches create a resilient and integrated economy that balances economic growth with sustainable development, increasing environmental resilience, and fostering socio-economic benefits for all, including women and youth, such as job creation and innovation.

128. A Mediterranean circular green and blue economy will generate sustainable development and employment through public and private investments, while reducing carbon emissions and pollution, enhancing energy and resource efficiency, and preventing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The related sustainable investments would be catalysed by targeted public and private expenditure, innovative policy and regulatory changes, awareness, training and research initiatives, innovation and the uptake of new technologies and processes, progressive tax and job reforms, the promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns in general, as well as by increasing the role of social enterprises.

129. This green development path would maintain, enhance and, where necessary, rebuild natural capital as a critical economic asset and a source of public benefits, especially for people whose livelihoods and security depend heavily on natural resources. Indeed, the Arab Forum for Environment and Development, in advocating a development model rooted in a green economy as a sound foundation for addressing the shortcomings of Arab economies, also emphasizes the efficient use and deployment of natural assets to diversify the economy, which in turn provides immunity against the volatilities and recessionary pressures of the global economy.
130. This objective related to the transition towards a **circular** green and blue economy is crucial for the achievement of the Strategy's vision. These new paradigms are likely to illuminate the paths for the necessary decoupling between prosperity and use of resources, and to provide credible responses to the sustainability challenges being faced today. In addition, through its first objective on coastal and marine areas, the Strategy promotes the blue economy concept through strong partnership between maritime sectors and public authorities in regard to the sustainable and equitable use of marine and coastal areas and resources.
- 131.** The green economy explicitly includes the objectives of job creation and social inclusion, in order to promote a more healthy and just society. The social economy, including cooperatives and the voluntary sector, has an important role to play in the green economy. In addition, the active participation of all relevant stakeholders in the necessary transition would be guaranteed in an efficient, consistent and transparent manner, engaging with local communities and respecting cultural contexts. The link with the Strategy's sixth objective on Governance, another cross-cutting objective, is therefore fundamental in facilitating the transition to the green economy. Making the transition to green development will not be a one-time event. Rather, it must be viewed as a long and demanding process guided both by top-down policy prescription as well as bottom-up public participation. This approach will give the ecological transition the political and social legitimacy **needed to ensure the wide-scale mobilization of efforts required.**
- 132.** A key pillar of the transition to a green and blue economy is finance that supports green and sustainable activities. The terms green and sustainable are often used together in the context of investment, but they represent distinct but complementary concepts. Green investments focus specifically on environmental benefits—such as reducing carbon emissions, conserving biodiversity, or investing in renewable energy solutions. These are targeted towards addressing environmental challenges and directly supporting the transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy. On the other hand, sustainable investments take a broader view. They not only consider environmental factors but also incorporate social and governance elements (known as ESG factors). Sustainable investments aim to achieve a balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection, thus ensuring long-term resilience and prosperity. Mediterranean countries require green and sustainable investments and related economic tools to support their transformation and adapt/mitigate climate and environmental change. To achieve this, it is essential to establish a common regional Framework for Green and Sustainable Investments in the Mediterranean. It is also essential to progressively phase-out harmful policies and economic tools, such as Environmentally Harmful Subsidies (EHS), as highlighted by UNEP/MAP & Plan Bleu (2024) while addressing the barriers and challenges that hinder the adoption of greener financial strategies. At the same time, identifying opportunities to enhance green and sustainable finance and related economic instruments will be crucial in promoting sustainability. Additionally, fostering inclusive, multi-level engagement between public and private stakeholders is essential in shaping green finance initiatives, including the involvement of banks and financial institutions in the definition of a sustainable investment system for the Mediterranean. Financial strategies should also reflect societal needs and strengthen community resilience to ensure a just and effective transition.

Objective 5: Accelerate transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance		
Targets	Indicators	
	Regional	Global
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators UNEP/MAP System other indicators	Relevant Global Indicators
Target 13: By 2030, Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have in place effective regulatory and policy frameworks, including economic incentives, aimed at facilitating the development of sustainable business models that integrate circularity and eco-innovation principles in the green and blue economies, while contributing to the development of non-pollutant and socially inclusive economies, in line with the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan for the Mediterranean.	New MSSD Indicator: Percentages of companies per International Standard Industrial Classification SIC codes sustainability reports New MSSD Indicator: Number of Mediterranean countries that have implemented the regional SCP Action Plan	SDG 12, Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns Indicator 12.6.1, Number of companies publishing sustainability reports
Target 14: By 2035 Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have established sustainable finance frameworks that mobilize capital towards green and sustainable investments, while fostering collaboration among all stakeholders.	New MSSD Indicator: Number of Mediterranean Countries established a sustainable finance framework	No corresponding SDGs

133. Addressing socio-economic inequalities between and within countries, owing partly to the high unemployment rate, is a key concern for the green economy. The creation of green and just jobs for all is therefore critical, in particular for youth and women, to ensure a sustainable and just development in the Mediterranean region. (strategic direction 5.1). New jobs would be gender-inclusive and provide social solidarity mechanism to workers. The Strategy includes an action to strengthen the role of green jobs in eradicating poverty and enhancing social inclusion through skills assessment and gap analysis for green jobs, which will help develop tailored capacity-development programmes. At an international level, the compilation and dissemination of best practice guidelines, including harmonised regional definitions, to promote the growth in green jobs and green and social entrepreneurship is envisaged.

Strategic direction 5.1: Create green, just and decent jobs for all, particularly youth and women, to eradicate poverty and enhance social inclusion		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
5.1.1. Undertake a skills assessment and gap analysis considering the advances in digitalization and AI, monitor and forecast demand for green jobs to strengthen the role of green jobs in eradicating poverty and enhancing social inclusion.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2030
5.1.2. Develop training and capacity building programmes for green and digital skills and green jobs, particularly for youth and women.	National governments, local authorities, regional institutions, civil society, private sector, academia, education institutions	2030
5.1.3. Raise awareness, particularly among decision-makers, about the potential of the circular economy transition to promote resilient, low-carbon, resource-efficient and socially- inclusive economic development.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, regional institutions, civil society, private sector, academia	2035
5.1.4. Foster labour justice and gender mainstreaming within green jobs strategies and policy instruments	National governments, local authorities, civil society, academia, private sector	2035
Regional		
5.1.5. Compile and disseminate best practice guidelines, including harmonised regional definitions, to promote the growth in green jobs and green and social entrepreneurship	Regional institutions, national, governments, specialised agencies	2035
5.1.6 Develop and implement strategies to secure funding and establish financial instruments and mechanisms aimed at promoting green jobs	Regional institutions, national, governments, specialised agencies	2035

134. Fundamental changes in the way societies consume and produce are indispensable for achieving sustainable development. Therefore, the Strategy is complemented by the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan for the Mediterranean. The Action Plan highlights four priority areas of consumption and production, namely food, agriculture and fisheries; goods manufacturing; tourism; and, housing and construction.

135. In the priority area of food, agriculture and fisheries, operational objectives are provided on: the promotion of best environmental practices, technologies and innovation in growing and harvesting; set-up of sustainable business models across different sectors; policy and legal frameworks to promote sustainable agriculture, fisheries and food production and consumption; the education of food producers, retailers and consumers; and, support to the development of appropriate market tools and information to promote sustainability.

136. In the priority area of goods manufacturing, operational objectives are provided on: the integration of best available technologies and practices throughout the value chain of goods production; integrated policy-making and legal framework to promote sustainable consumption, production and recovery, to move towards a circular economy; and, raising awareness of consumers and stakeholders and supporting the development of market structures, increasing the visibility and market share of sustainable and alternative goods and services.

137. With respect to tourism, the Action Plan provides operational objectives addressing: practices and

solutions for efficient use of natural resources and reducing the environmental impacts of tourism, respecting the carrying capacities of the destination; regulatory, legislative and financial measures to mainstream sustainable consumption and production in tourism to reduce tourism seasonality and promote local community engagement and empowerment; and, awareness, capacities and skills to support sustainable destinations and green tourism services, and marketing schemes for a competitive and sustainable Mediterranean tourism sector.

138. Finally, for the priority area on housing and construction, the Action Plan provides operational objectives on the following topics: innovation, knowledge and integration of best available technologies and environmental practices for achieving resource efficiency throughout the life cycle of a building; regulatory and legal frameworks to enhance the contribution of housing and construction to sustainable development, social integration and cohesion; and, awareness-raising and capacity- building with stakeholders in urban planning, housing and construction to mainstream sustainable urban development.
139. The implementation of the action plan, thus strategic direction 5.2, will be secured through awareness raising programmes on sustainable lifestyles targeting the wider public. Regional capacity building to support countries in implementing the Action Plan is also envisaged.

Strategic direction 5.2: Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, to support the shift towards circular economy approaches and sustainable business models		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
5.2.1. Implement the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan for the Mediterranean.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector, academia	2035
5.2.2. Undertake awareness-raising and education programmes on sustainable lifestyles for promoting sustainable behaviour and increase the understanding of the benefits of circularity and sustainable consumption among citizens.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, educational Institutions, Environmental Education ESD Centers	2030
5.2.3 Foster the set-up of sustainable business models across different sectors	National governments, local authorities, private sector, civil society	2035
Regional		
5.2.4. Carry out capacity building programme to support countries in implementing the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan for the Mediterranean.	UNEP/MAP, SCP/RAC	2035

140. A large part of the pollution in the Mediterranean is due to inefficient industrial processes and poor management of waste. Apart from harming the environment and health, it also jeopardizes the competitiveness and long-term sustainability of industries. Strategic direction 5.3 promotes resource efficiency and eco-innovation as critical tools to allow businesses and economies to be more productive, while reducing cost, waste and use of raw materials. Creating and connecting green and social incubators and training programmes, including through partnerships between universities, businesses and research centres at national and regional scales is also necessary. At a regional level, a Mediterranean network of green and social incubators and training programmes is envisaged. A flagship initiative to create a Mediterranean business award for environmental innovation is also included.

Strategic direction 5.3: Encourage innovation, public private partnerships and sustainable solutions to advance towards the objectives of a just low-carbon, circular, green and blue economy		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
5.3.1. Adopt regulatory and economic incentives to foster sustainable business models that integrate circular economy principles and Increase capacity for eco-innovation in the industry and service sectors, and the adoption of of eco-design principles that extend all along the lifecycle of products through circular economy models, including to promote market uptake.	National governments, civil society, academia, private sector	2035
5.3.2. Support networks of Business Support Organizations (BSOs and circular economy hubs adopting sustainable and circular approaches for businesses and entrepreneurs.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
5.3.3. Promote and support collaborative partnerships between universities, businesses and research centres, civil society organizations (CSOs) and public institutions fostering cooperation to drive innovation	National governments, local authorities, civil society, academia, private sector	2035
Regional		
5.3.4. Create a regional/sub-regional of circular economy incubators including social innovation, and training programmes and enhance the capacities and networks of Business Support Organizations (BSOs) for sustainable business development	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035

141. Misallocation of capital contributes to the development of inefficient, underused and environmentally harmful infrastructure. The Strategy promotes the integration of sustainability principles and criteria into decision-making on public and private investment through the provision of tools and guidelines (strategic direction 5.4), while externalities are often not sufficiently addressed by markets and policies, creating misleading price signals and incentives for business-as-usual practices linked to a high-carbon economy and by integrating the polluter-pays principle extended producer responsibility and payment for ecosystem services based on economic valuation. This is linked to strategic direction 2.2 under the marine and coastal areas objective. The integration of sustainability principles into public procurement at national and local levels and promoting key instruments such as eco-design criteria and the environmental certification of products and services are also envisaged, together with the promotion to extended producer responsibility. In the public sector, governments can lead by example by implementing policies that require sustainability assessments for public investments. This could include evaluating projects based on their potential for promoting circularity, minimizing waste, and reducing carbon emissions. At the regional level, capacity- building is required, in addition to improved dialogue with international donors for securing the mainstreaming of economic and social criteria in investments, including capacity- building on market instruments and on integrating the polluter- pays principle. This holistic approach encourages investments in technologies and practices that support a circular economy, such as renewable energy, waste reduction, and resource efficiency, ultimately leading to long-term benefits for both investors and communities. Finally, a flagship initiative focuses on the integration of sustainability principles into public procurement at national and local levels.

Strategic direction 5.4: Promote the integration of sustainability, circularity and climate change principles and criteria on the programming and evaluation frameworks of public and private investment		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
5.4.1. Promote environmental fiscal reform to reduce tax on labour and integrate the polluter-pays principle into finance policy.	National governments	2030
5.4.2. Establish clear sustainability, circularity and climate change criteria for evaluating public and private investments, ensuring that financial flows prioritize resource efficiency, low-carbon innovation, and environmental impact reduction	National governments, private sector, civil society	2030
5.4.3. Promote extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) or similar mechanisms that enhances resource efficiency, waste reduction, and product lifecycle accountability, encouraging industries to design products that are durable, repairable, and recyclable	National governments, private sector, civil society	2030
5.4.4. Raise the awareness of financial actors on the need to mainstream environmental and social impact assessments prior to investments decisions by providing tools and guidelines and enhancing capacities.	National governments, private sector, civil society	2035
5.4.5. Promote eco-design criteria covering the whole lifecycle of products and environmental certification of products and services.	National governments, academia, private sector	2035
Regional		
5.4.6. Provide assistance to countries interested in integrating the polluter- pays principle, extended producer responsibility and payments for ecosystem services into national finance policies.	International institutions, national governments, private sector	2030
5.4.7. Build capacity of national agencies on sustainable investment and promotion corporate social responsibility in private sector, including corporate environmental responsibility.	International institutions, national governments and agencies, private sector	2030
5.4.8. Initiate or strengthen dialogue with international funding institutions with a view to obtaining a commitment regarding the use of environmental and social criteria for investments.	International institutions, national governments, private sector	2035

142. Mediterranean countries require green and sustainable finance and related economic tools to support the necessary transition of the region, particularly to adapt to the impacts of climate and environmental change. To successfully drive this transition, they need a compelling and forward-looking vision that engages the relevant stakeholders at all levels, and fosters support for green and sustainable finance and economic policies. This vision should promote a positive and proactive approach to foster public and private investments that cater to regional, national, and local needs, while ensuring sustainable economic development and enhancing societal well-being, in line with the Strategic Directions of the MSSD. A deeper understanding of the current landscape of green and sustainable finance and related economic tools in the Mediterranean is thus essential. This includes three elements: the mapping of existing financial instruments with recommendations for scaling up the most effective ones in term of sustainability; the scoping of economic activities in the Mediterranean that contribute to sustainability (taxonomy); and the identification of environmentally harmful subsidies in economic sectors that affect the Mediterranean region. This would constitute the Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance, which should be supported by concrete, actionable steps to ensure sustainability while addressing social and employment challenges (green and blue jobs). Mediterranean countries must first tackle the barriers and challenges they face in developing and implementing greener financial strategies. In this context, it is crucial to identify opportunities to enhance green and sustainable finance and related economic tools to promote sustainability. The lack of data and structured finance strategies in some countries underscores the heterogeneity across the region, making the creation of a Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance essential for coherent and effective action. Additionally, coherence between public and private financial mechanisms and flows is necessary to ensure that sustainable strategies and action plans are effectively implemented. Finally, Mediterranean countries must engage in discussions about interconnections and synergies between economic, environmental, and social priorities and involve all relevant stakeholders, national and local, in a cross-cutting, inclusive decision-making process to drive the green and sustainable transition forward.

Strategic direction 5.5: Promote an integrated financial ecosystem through a Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance aiming to foster the channeling of private and public capital into sustainable investments.		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
5.5.1. Develop national Frameworks for Green and Sustainable Finance identifying financial and policy instruments (e.g., green and blue bonds, concessional loans, grants, investment funds, tax incentives for accelerating the sustainable transition, and climate risk insurance) to facilitate financial flows to sustainable investments, while supporting adaptation, resilience-building, and considering social implications and acceptability.	National governments, local authorities, financial institutions	2030
5.5.2. Develop national green and sustainable finance networks bringing together different stakeholders (e.g. financial institutions, governments, private sector, academia, and NGOs) to enhance collaboration, share best practices, and facilitate knowledge exchange on green and sustainable finance.	National governments, local authorities, financial institutions, private sector, academia	2030
Regional		
5.5.3. Develop a Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance that incorporates Mediterranean-specific challenges and priorities to	Regional institutions, national authorities,	2030

Strategic direction 5.5: Promote an integrated financial ecosystem through a Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance aiming to foster the channeling of private and public capital into sustainable investments.		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
guide investments in green and sustainable projects, particularly on adaptation, taking into account national priorities.	regional/international donors, Plan Bleu	
5.5.4. Develop a Mediterranean-wide sustainable finance network connecting financial institutions, governments, private sector, academia, and NGOs to foster cross-border collaboration and accelerate sustainable investment (supporting both adaptation and mitigation efforts).	Regional institutions, financial institutions, governments, private sector, academia, NGOs	2030
5.5.5. Develop and implement regional guidelines for green and sustainable budgeting practices to integrate environmental and climate objectives into both annual and multi-year national and regional budgets.	National governments, local authorities, regional/international institutions, Plan Bleu	2030
5.5.6. Identification of major strategic projects, including proposals by local communities, that are key to enhance sustainability in the whole Mediterranean, with the aim to attract capital flow. .	National governments, local authorities, financial institutions, private sector, academia, Plan Bleu	2030

Objective 6: Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.

Vision and Actions

143. Governance is a cross-cutting objective, relevant to each of the other objectives of the Strategy. This objective focuses on improving institutional capacities on sustainable development governance at the national level. Furthermore, the objective focuses in ensuring the full involvement of all stakeholders in promoting and achieving sustainable development at the regional, national and local level. The objective considers the promotion of the role and reinforced awareness and capacities of local authorities in implementing the Strategy objectives, while aspects of governance related to the implementation of the Strategy are addressed in Chapter 3. Governance is characterized by the inclusion of non-state actors in the decision-making process, such as civil society, in particular local authorities, youth and women, financial institutions, private sector, and international organizations. This also involves new forms of cooperation arrangements, either at a national or at a transnational level, such as public-private partnerships. This multi-level governance, with different parallel yet interlinked rule-making systems, demands for a reinforced multi-stakeholder processes for supporting and monitoring policy development and implementation, while science-policy interface should also be further exploited to provide better information for decision-makers, also through a set of core indicators providing a summary of the major environmental and socio-economic challenges the Mediterranean faces, shedding light on the region's progress over the past three decades. The core indicators offer a perspective on the Mediterranean's evolution, reflecting the intricate interplay between education, health, economic vitality, environmental stewardship, and sustainability.

144. Governance issues in the Mediterranean range from endangered peace in the region, to inequalities among and within countries and weak public engagement, involvement and participation. Challenges for environmental governance include horizontal and vertical (due to lack of subsidiarity) fragmentation of responsibility for the environmental dossier, insufficient, uncoordinated and non- results-based planning, management, implementation and monitoring, as

well as weak human, **technical** and financial resources in the public sector, particularly at the local level. Finally, inadequate awareness and education, research and innovation, and sharing of knowledge and information, are also **sustainable development** governance challenges faced in Mediterranean countries.

145. Effective **inclusive** and efficient governance requires that participation in decision-making and cooperation to ensure social justice considerations are taken into account. Participation and cooperation need to be strengthened, and more sustainable development opportunities to address inequalities should be found. Governance has to be flexible and adaptive; it should devise new forms of institutions based on discussion and participation, as well as innovative legal conceptions and constructive practices directly related to sustainability governance, taking also into account the new digital world and the opportunities it offers.
146. Finally, wide variations in the development models of Mediterranean countries do not allow a “one policy for all” approach and therefore emphasis needs to be placed on their specific needs and contexts. Fragmentation of responsibility needs to be addressed through increased policy integration and coordination. Horizontal institutional reforms including, inter alia, legal, administrative and taxation reforms (such as green national accounting, green tax reform) and efforts to fight corruption, are some of the approaches to be considered. The science-policy interface should also be expanded to provide better information for decision-makers and the public.

Objective 6: Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.		
Targets	Indicators	
	Regional	Global
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators UNEP/MAP System other indicators	Relevant Global Indicators
Target 15 : By 2030, Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have formal mechanisms in place to ensure subsidiarity and synergies between policies at different levels of decision-making and across sectors in the long-term and across borders thus enhancing policy coherence on sustainable development (PCSD), including involvement of stakeholders.	New MSSD Indicator: Number of countries with mechanisms addressing marine and coastal environment subject to strategic environment impact assessment and policy consultation New MSSD Indicator: Number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development	SDG 17, Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Indicator 14.2.1. Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to marine areas Indicator 17.14.1, Number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development
Target 16: By 2030, ensure that all learners, including the general public, acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others,	MSSD Core indicator 3, Average years of schooling MSSD Dashboard Indicator 28: Education for Sustainable Development	SDG 4, Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all Indicator 4.7.1, Extent to which (i) global citizenship

Objective 6: Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.		
Targets	Indicators	
	Regional	Global
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators UNEP/MAP System other indicators	Relevant Global Indicators
through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.	New MSSD Indicator: Extent to which education for sustainable development is mainstreamed in the national education policies, curricula and teacher education	education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment
Target 17: By 2035, Mediterranean Countries have acceded to the Aarhus Convention.	MSSD Dashboard Indicator 27: Effective public participation and public access to environmental information New MSSD Indicator: Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information	SDG 16, Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels Indicator 16.10.2, Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information

147. Strategic direction 6.1 addresses enhanced regional, sub-regional and cross-border dialogue, cooperation, and networking processes, including emergency-preparedness mechanisms. At the national level, the Strategy focuses on preparedness / prevention plans and alert mechanisms in case of (natural and human-made) disasters, as well as adaptive actions. At the regional level, an action to strengthen regional dialogue through cooperation and networking, including on emergency-preparedness is included, along with an action to strengthen regional and sub-regional dialogue and cooperation to better understand the relationship between environmentally-sustainable development and the challenges and opportunities related to population flows.

Strategic direction 6.1: Enhance regional, sub-regional and cross-border dialogue and cooperation, including on emergency-preparedness		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
6.1.1. Strengthen preparedness / prevention and cooperation plans and alert mechanisms in case of (natural and human-made) disaster, as well as adaptive actions.	National governments, local authorities, civil society	2035
Regional		

6.1.2. Strengthen regional and sub- regional dialogue, cooperation and networking processes, including on emergency- preparedness.	National governments, international institutions, civil society	2035
6.1.3. Strengthen regional and sub- regional dialogue and cooperation in order to better understand the relationship between environmentally- sustainable development and the challenges and opportunities related to population flows.	International institutions, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society	2035

148. Strategic Direction 6.2 addresses strengthening the governance of the Strategy as a crosscutting endeavor that concerns the systemic reinforcement of the role of sub-national and local governments/municipalities in the Strategy decision-making and implementation processes, in order to further promote and encourage stakeholders' engagement and action at local level as well as a stronger inclusive processes, therefore upscaling the impact of the Strategy on the ground.

Strategic direction 6.2: Strengthen the role, awareness and capacities of sub-national and local governments/ municipalities and of National and Regional Parliaments for implementing national and subnational sustainable development strategies and thus contribute to the achievement of SDG and MSSD objectives		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
6.2.1. Strengthen the institutional capacity and of sub-national and local governments/ municipalities to integrate and implement the MSSD objectives, while Strengthening coordination and collaboration mechanisms with national governments/authorities	National governments and sub-national and local government/municipalities	2035
6.2.2. Enable the implementation of SDGs and MSSD objectives at the sub-national and local level through training programs aimed at public policy coherence	National governments and sub-national and local government/municipalities	2035
6.2.3 Implement awareness campaigns for inclusive decision-making and participatory governance, also by strengthening ESD networks for policy understanding.		2035
Regional		
6.2.4. Promote at regional level the exchange of best practices among sub-national and local governments/ municipalities on institutional capacity building for sustainable development and local stakeholders' engagement	Regional Conventions, National governments and sub-national and local government/municipalities	2035

149. The Strategy promotes the engagement of civil society, scientists, local communities, youth and women, financial institutions, private sector, and other stakeholders in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive processes and integrity in decision-making. Public participation is particularly important at the local level, which is the level of government closest to the people, and the level of decision-making where many environment-related decisions are taken. Increased public participation has to be achieved through support for national, sub-national and local governments and institutions by means of improved legal frameworks and human and financial resources and has to include skills related to partnership- building, negotiation and conflict resolution. The Strategy also envisages support for and strengthening of the organizational capacity of local, national and regional stakeholders, including voluntary organizations, cooperatives, associations, networks, and producer groups, in terms of legal frameworks and human and financial resources. That will contribute to better decision-making, implementation of policies, plans and

projects, and monitoring. At the regional level, accession to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) is encouraged as a flagship initiative.

150. The Strategy promotes the engagement of civil society, scientists, local communities **youth and women, financial institutions, private sector** in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive processes and integrity in decision-making (strategic direction 6.3). Public participation is particularly important at the local level, which is the level of government closest to the people, and the level of decision-making where many environment-related decisions are taken. Increased public participation has to be achieved through support for national, **sub-national and** local governments and institutions by means of improved legal frameworks and human and financial resources and has to include skills related to partnership-building, negotiation and conflict resolution. The Strategy also envisages support for and strengthening of the organizational capacity of local, national and regional stakeholders, including voluntary organizations, cooperatives, associations, networks, and producer groups, in terms of legal frameworks and human and financial resources. That will contribute to better decision-making, implementation of policies, plans and projects, and monitoring.

Strategic direction 6.3: Promote the engagement of civil society, scientists, youth and women, financial institutions, private sector, local communities and other stakeholders in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive whole of society processes and integrity in decision-making		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
6.3.1. Set up, where relevant, and strengthen the capacity of national governments sub-national and local authorities for public participation in terms of legal frameworks and human and financial resources	International institutions, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society	2035
6.3.2 Support and strengthen the capacity and awareness of local, and national stakeholders and non-state actors, also by strengthening ESD networks for civic engagement in sustainability projects	National governments, local authorities, regional actors and initiatives, civil society	2035
6.3.3 Develop and implement policies that promote gender equality in coastal management and decision-making processes, including targeted training programs to build women's knowledge and skills in coastal resource management, fisheries, marine conservation, and environmental governance	National governments, civil society, academia	2035

151. The Strategy promotes implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements to guide actions at national and regional levels (strategic direction 6.4). It highlights the importance of ensuring policy coherence, based on mechanisms for inter-ministerial coordination and cross-sectoral planning. The Strategy promotes the implementation of the precautionary principle through instruments such as environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments. It encourages the support, through legal provisions where relevant, of partnerships in planning and implementation, including but not limited to private sector involvement, public-private partnerships, and innovative financing at regional (subnational) and/or local level. A flagship initiative is included to develop capacity-building programmes on issues related to implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements, including environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments.

Strategic direction 6.4: Promote the implementation, and monitoring of the SD Strategies at all levels of government, considering synergies and tradeoffs between different policies and sectors, including intersectional management (WEFENEXUS) by improving policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) based on whole of government approach, inter-ministerial coordination and multi-level government		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
6.4.1. Ensure ratification, compliance and implementation of global and regional agreements related to environmental sustainability, to guide actions at national and regional levels.	International institutions, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society	2035
6.4.2. Ensure the adoption of the precautionary principle and its application by undertaking environmental impact assessments, strategic environmental assessments and other relevant procedures.	National governments, local authorities, academia, civil society, private sector	2035
6.4.3. Enhance inter-ministerial coordination and cross-sectoral planning and multi-level governance through policy coherence for sustainable development.	National governments, local authorities, civil society	2035
6.4.4. Encourage and support, through legal provisions where relevant, partnerships in planning and implementation, including but not limited to private sector involvement, public-private partnerships, and innovative financing at regional (subnational) and/or local level.	International institutions, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society, private sector	2035

152. The Strategy promotes education and research for sustainable development (strategic direction 6.5). in particular through the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development. The aim of the latter Strategy is to encourage Mediterranean countries to develop and incorporate education for sustainable development into their formal education systems, in all relevant subjects, in particular in green and blue economy sectors and circular economy related professions, as well as in non-formal and informal education. The objectives of this Strategy focus on the following aspects of education for sustainable development: policy, legislation and other regulatory and operational support frameworks; promotion through formal, non-formal and informal learning; equipping educators with the competence to include sustainable development in their teaching; accessible and adequate tools and materials; research and development; and, cooperation at all levels, including exchange of experience and technologies within the region.

153. The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development also includes an action to strengthen research capabilities in the area of sustainable development, as well as the science-policy interface. At the regional level, the Strategy underlines the value of large-scale programmes (e.g. European Union Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programmes) to promote sustainable development research and innovation, and the importance of encouraging and supporting partnerships amongst countries. It promotes also the exchange of good practices and knowledge in all aspects of education and learning for sustainable development.

6.5: Promote education and research for sustainable development		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
6.5.1. Implement the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, which promotes the integration of the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning, and taking in due account the United Nations' Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society, academia and educators	2035
6.5.2. Strengthen knowledge and research capacity at the national level, through long-term provision of training opportunities, particularly in the green and blue economy sectors and circular economy related professions, transfer of knowledge and research infrastructure development.	International institutions, national governments, local authorities, educational and scientific communities, private sector, and civil society	2035
6.5.3. Strengthen the science-policy interface, to support decision making by scientific analysis and data, through research fora, seminars, and other opportunities for exchange, and taking in due account the United Nations' Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030.	International institutions, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society	2035
Regional		
6.5.4 Promote research and innovation by ensuring that large-scale programmes and initiatives (e.g. European Union Horizon Europe Research Programmes) take into account Mediterranean priorities for sustainable development.	International institutions, academia, civil society	2030

154. Strategic direction 6.6 addresses regional capabilities for information management in relation to scientific data on sustainable development and environment. In order to allow for appropriate knowledge-based decision- and policy making, as well as policy foresight, national information centres will be established, which will collect existing and new information. Joint knowledge-creation and knowledge-sharing initiatives with stakeholders, including the scientific community, the private sector and civil society are envisaged, which follow the European Union's Shared Environmental Information System principles on data-sharing and fair data management principles. At the regional level, capacity-building on data and information production and sharing and the coordination of national monitoring programmes are included. A flagship initiative is also envisaged to establish a publicly-accessible Mediterranean integrated information system, through which synergy is established between national governments, international institutions and the private sector, to collect and transparently display information on the state of the environment and the status of delivery on the protocols to the Barcelona Convention. This will draw on data and support systems already in place, for example the UNEP/MAP Knowledge Management Platform as the hub of UNEP/MAP knowledge heritage, following commitments of the adopted UNEP/MAP data policy.

Strategic direction 6.6: Strengthen regional capabilities for information management and enhance the promotion of evidence-informed policymaking and foresight		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
6.6.1. Establish or strengthen support for data monitoring processes, including through survey information, as well as national centres providing integrated and publicly accessible information.	National governments, regional institutions, civil society, private sector	2030
6.6.2. Foster joint knowledge-creation and knowledge-sharing initiatives between stakeholders that respect the European Union's Shared Environmental Information System principles on data sharing.	International institutions, national governments, and local authorities, academia, civil society	2035
Regional		
6.6.3. Develop capacity on data and information production, sharing and management and enhance technology where necessary to create comparable and compatible data, and support informed policy making and policy foresight evidence based, also through a set of core indicators providing a summary of the major environmental and socio-economic challenges	Regional institutions, national governments, academia Plan Bleu/RAC INFO /RAC	2035
6.6.4. Coordinate national and regional monitoring programmes at the regional level, including through annual workshops.	Regional institutions, national governments, National and Regional Parliaments	2035

4. ENSURE THE IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2026-2035

155. The implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 is a collective process. Although facilitated by the UNEP/MAP system, it is the participation and active role of all stakeholders that will play a decisive role in its delivery.
156. The UNEP/MAP system, which includes the UNEP/MAP Secretariat and the Regional Activity Centres, as well as the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, will provide leadership and guidance with respect to implementing the Strategy. Indeed, the main UNEP/MAP policies and related measures formulated with a view to implementing the Protocols to the Barcelona Convention as well as other key existing regional mechanisms and instruments are essential for the implementation of the Strategy (Box 2). In addition, the UNEP/MAP system will provide support and technical guidance to the Contracting Parties, as well as the coordination of implementation actions and monitoring processes, as well as a platform for the exchange of relevant information, experience and synergies developed at regional or sub-regional level.
157. The Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development is a key structure within the UNEP/MAP system for supporting the development and implementation of the Strategy. As a central point of reference and bringing together representatives of the Parties and stakeholders involved with sustainable development, it will work closely, supported by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat, with the relevant organizations for the effective implementation of the Strategy. The Strategy represents a policy and action oriented framework for the Commission's work.
158. Intergovernmental and regional and sub-regional institutions also have a very important role to play in the implementation of the Strategy. Working in tandem with each other and with the UNEP/MAP system, as well as facilitating synergies with Contracting Parties using the Strategy as a common platform, they can be critical for successful implementation. They will not only create an important critical mass of significant national and regional players working in a coordinated way towards sustainable development but will also have a positive effect on using the limited human and financial resources needed for the implementation of joint activities more efficiently. For these partners, the Strategy represents a coherent and integrated set of priority strategic directions and actions that need to be implemented to achieve sustainable development in the region, in which their actions and objectives are placed within an overall framework.
159. The private sector is a key partner for the implementation of the Strategy. As a key player in the emerging green economy, the private sector can be one of the strongest allies in the process of implementing the Strategy. This is not only through corporate social responsibility, but also through more sustainable consumption and production processes that are part of its core business, through the integration of innovative technologies, and through improved upstream and downstream processes of the industrial, artisanal and marketing chains. That will also contribute towards the sustainability of its own operations. For the private sector, the Strategy provides an indication of issues, directions and actions that have to be implemented to further sustainable development goals at regional, national and local level, and the type of discussions that have to be held within the context of sustainable development in the near future. This indication is of prime importance for business planning.
160. Science is key to success: all action and policy development at the national or regional level must rely on a strong evidence bases. The analytical tools that will allow the forecasting, planning and assessment of sustainable development-related impacts and actions need to be developed with the scientific community, which itself needs to direct its research capacity in support of decision making. For academia, the Strategy contains a series of sustainable development concerns that require assistance from science to understand.
161. Civil society has always been an important group of stakeholders in the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development. In the implementation of the Strategy, its role becomes more pronounced: besides being a catalyst for supporting and monitoring the implementation process at the regional and national level, civil society can take up important tasks related to awareness and sensitization, as well as acting as the third pillar of democracy, along with decision-

makers and judicial entities, to ensure transparency and secure the participation of the people. For civil society, the Strategy contains a set of strategic directions that at once inform its work along with other partners and it provides a fertile ground for the development of projects.

162.. Delivering on SDG-14 and the 2030 Agenda as a whole will require youth and women empowerment, and inclusive policies that leave no one behind. Young people in the Mediterranean are solution-oriented, seeking green jobs and opportunities from a sustainable blue economy that delivers on its promises, including in the digital space. At the same time, the role of women in sustainable development is multidimensional and their voices need to be included at every forefront; they are often the first responders to their families, have unique ideas and perspectives, and often drive change at various levels. Local authorities are key actors of implementation for two main reasons: a) They are implementors by nature, since around 70% of SDG's rely on the effective work of local (including metropolitan) authorities; b) They are closer to citizens, both organized or individuals; the engagement of general public and citizens is very relevant to the implementation of the Strategy. Through its proximity, local authorities may be firsthand enhancers of those behavioral changes.

163. National and Regional Parliaments play a pivotal role in supporting implementation, by fostering their oversight exercise, also through parliamentary assemblies and regional fora.

164. Funding institutions are also key partners for the implementation of the Strategy. For these partners, the Strategy contains a set of widely agreed regional objectives as well as strategic directions within these objectives, which will help such bodies to position and assess funding proposals aimed at advancing sustainable development in the region.

Box 2: Existing regional programmes and frameworks constituting essential tools for implementing the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035

- Integrated coastal zone management is recognised as the way forward for the sustainable development of coastal zones and is characterised by a distinctive integrated approach to providing solutions to the complex environmental, social, economic and institutional problems of the coastal zones. As indicated by Article 2 of the **Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management for the Mediterranean** under the Barcelona Convention, “Integrated coastal zone management means a dynamic process for the sustainable management and use of coastal zones, taking into account at the same time the fragility of coastal ecosystems and landscapes, the diversity of activities and uses, their interactions, the maritime orientation of certain activities and uses and their impact on both the marine and land parts”. The adoption of this protocol is a fully achieved policy-objective of the initial Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (2005). Its implementation is supported by the Action Plan 2012-2019.
- The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention committed to apply the ecosystem-based approach – through the **Ecosystem Approach Roadmap** – to the management of human activities while enabling a sustainable use of marine goods and services, with the view to achieving or maintaining good environmental status of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal regions, their protection and preservation, as well as preventing their subsequent deterioration. They recognize the ecosystem approach as an integrated operational approach for the successful implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its protocols while enhancing sustainable development in the region, as well as a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.
- The **Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean** (entered into force in 1999) is implemented through the **Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO)** adopted in 2021. In addition, the extension of the network of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance and the adoption and implementation of a **Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area based conservation measures in the**

Mediterranean represent important achievements for the region.

The Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan for the Mediterranean, which is under preparation, aims at achieving the shift to sustainable patterns of consumption and production in priority economic sectors while addressing related environmental degradation challenges. It supports the implementation of sustainable consumption and production actions at the regional level and identifies actions to guide the implementation of the sustainable consumption and production at the national level, addressing key human activities which have a particular impact on the marine and coastal environment and related transversal and cross-cutting issues

- The adoption by the Contracting Parties of Regional Plans on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, on Urban Wastewater Treatment, on Sewage Sludge Management, on Agriculture Management, on Aquaculture Management and on Urban Stormwater Management, are major breakthroughs to combat marine pollution from Land Based Sources and Activities
- The **Offshore Action Plan** includes priority actions and measures for the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to ratify the Offshore Protocol; designate Contracting Parties' representatives to participate to the regional governing bodies; establish a technical cooperation and capacity building programme; establish a financial mechanism for the implementation of the Action Plan; promote access to information and public participation in decision-making; enhance the regional transfer of technology; develop and adopt regional offshore standards; develop and adopt regional offshore guidelines; establish regional offshore monitoring procedures and programmes; and, report on the implementation of the Action Plan.
- **The Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas**, which is under preparation, aims to increase the resilience of the Mediterranean marine and coastal areas to climate change through the development of a regional approach to climate change adaptation. Once adopted, this framework will form the basis for the development of a detailed Regional Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan.
- **The Ministerial Declarations and other frameworks established under the Union for the Mediterranean, including the 2030 GreenerMed Agenda.**
- With a 2030 target, **the EU Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters"** aims to protect and restore the health of our ocean and waters through research and innovation, citizen engagement and blue investments. The Mission's new approach will address the ocean and waters as one and play a key role in achieving climate neutrality and restoring nature. Cross-cutting enabling actions will support this objective, in particular broad public mobilisation and engagement and a digital ocean and water knowledge system, known as Digital Twin Ocean. The Mission supports regional engagement and cooperation through area-based "lighthouses" in major sea/river basins: Atlantic-Arctic, Mediterranean Sea, Baltic-North Sea, and Danube-Black Sea. Mission lighthouses are sites to pilot, demonstrate, develop and deploy the Mission activities across EU seas and river basins.
- **The Environmental Reports on Resolutions unanimously adopted by all the 31 Member Parliaments of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) at the 17th, 18th and 19th PAM Plenary Sessions**, recalling the crucial role of National and Regional Parliaments in implementing the provisions of the Barcelona Conventions and its Protocols, to facilitate the advancement of SDGs in the region. The 2024 "Parliamentarian's guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast" (UNEP, 2024) is a concrete tool for parliamentarians engage for stronger enforcement of, and compliance with, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.
- Endorsed at the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Change of the Union for the Mediterranean, the **Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable**

Development encourages the Mediterranean countries to develop and incorporate education on sustainable development into their formal education systems, in all relevant subjects, and in non-formal and informal education. This will equip people with knowledge of and skills in sustainable development, making them more competent and confident and increasing their opportunities for acting for a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature and with concern for social values, gender equity and cultural diversity.

- **WestMed Initiative** was adopted by the European Commission on 19 April 2017 and endorsed by the Council of the EU on 26 June 2017. In 2018 a common roadmap was agreed for the development of a sustainable blue economy in the sub-basin to generate growth, create jobs and provide a better living environment for Mediterranean populations, while preserving the services performed by the Mediterranean ecosystem. The roadmap includes 6 priorities: Maritime safety and the fight against marine pollution; Maritime cluster development; Skills development and circulation; Sustainable consumption and production; Biodiversity and marine habitat conservation and restoration; Development of coastal communities and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.
- The Macro-regional Strategy for the Mediterranean has appeared in recent years as an important tool to accelerate changes and address challenges and menaces regarding climate change, biodiversity loss, protection and restoration and sustainable development promotion. The European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions of the European Union and the European Economic and Social Council have approved or expressed resolutions and opinions to support such strategy. This Mediterranean Strategy salutes these steps and will consider the developing of this initiative as a potential enhancer of the implementation of this Strategy.
- The European Union (DG-MENA) funded “**Water and Environment Support-Biodiversity and Climate Action (WES-BCA) in the Neighborhood South region**” aims to improve the protection of the environment, the restoration of biodiversity and the management of scarce water resources, while enhancing the resilience to climate change in the Mediterranean region, strengthening the formulation, enforcement and implementation of the relevant policies and the two regional frameworks, namely the MAP/Barcelona Convention and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).
- Under the **New Pact for the Mediterranean**, the EU is expected to renew commitment to strengthen engagement with the region, addressing shared challenges and opportunities for sustainable development, inclusive growth, and regional stability. Building on the foundations of the 2021 Agenda for the Mediterranean, the Pact is expected to promote concrete initiatives for deeper, impact-driven cooperation.
- **The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)** is a macro-regional strategy adopted by the European Commission and endorsed by the European Council in 2014. The general objective of the EUSAIR is to promote economic and social prosperity and growth in the region by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity. With four EU members and four Western Balkan countries the strategy will contribute to the further integration of the Western Balkans. The countries are aiming to create synergies and foster coordination among all territories in the Adriatic-Ionian Region in the four thematic areas/ pillars: sustainable tourism, environmental quality, connecting the region and blue growth.
- **The Interreg Euro-MED Programme 2021-2027** supports cooperation across Mediterranean borders. The programme provides funds for projects developed and managed by public administrations, universities, private and civil society organizations to jointly implement transnational projects. The Programme brings together partners from 69 regions of 14 countries from the Northern shore of the Mediterranean with a common objective: a climate neutral and resilient society for the benefit of its citizens. The total programme budget amounts to about 294M€ for the 2021-2027 period. The Interreg Euro-MED Programme funds projects willing to bring solutions to answer 4 complementary missions: Strengthening an innovative sustainable economy, Protecting,

restoring and valorising the natural environment and heritage, Promoting green living areas, Enhancing sustainable tourism.

- **The Interreg Next Med Programme 2021-2027** aims to contribute to smart, sustainable, fair development for all across the Mediterranean basin by supporting balanced, long-lasting, far-reaching cooperation and multilevel governance. The programme's mission is to finance transnational cooperation projects that address joint socio-economic, environmental and governance challenges at Mediterranean level such as the uptake of advanced technologies, competitiveness of SMEs and job creation, energy efficiency, sustainable water management, climate change adaptation, transition to a circular and resource efficient economy, education and training, health care, etc. The cooperation area covers 15 countries: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Jordan, Malta, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia – and two new members, namely Algeria and Türkiye.

4.1. Institutional structures and means for the implementation of the Strategy

165. Further reinforcing adequate institutional structures is a key priority in providing for effective implementation of the Strategy. The existing management system for the Strategy implementation faces a number of challenges.
166. In order to improve sustainable development governance, it is essential that the right structures are put in place or strengthened, and properly resourced (strategic direction 7.1). At a national level, it is essential to ensure the wide participation of relevant organizations in sustainable development management through the setting up of sustainable development commissions, councils, fora, and networks as appropriate in each national context. These coordination and consultation bodies should serve to achieve wide and high-level political support at national level, particularly with key ministries whose competencies affect or are effected by, sustainable development, including the prime minister, where relevant, and must be supported by adequate human and financial resources.
167. At a regional level, it is essential that the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development should have its proper funding and its human resources and that MAP's own governance and funding programmes are designed to take into account the need for resources for sustainable development. A second regional action reflects on the need to enlarge the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development to ensure the participation of a larger number of relevant international organizations and stakeholder groups from the Mediterranean region involved in sustainable development processes.
168. Improving visibility and outreach of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, particularly within the United Nations system, such as within the Conferences of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention and at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development is essential. This would entail the establishment of a ministerial level of action through organization of regular four-yearly sessions dedicated to sustainable development of the Mediterranean at the ministerial level within the framework of the Conferences of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention. The final action under this strategic direction focuses on ensuring that the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development fulfils its role in promoting the exchange of good practices and networking in areas relevant to its remit.

Strategic direction 7.1: Put in place or strengthen structures for sustainable development implementation at national and regional scale, and ensure their adequate resourcing		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
7.1.1. Ensure a wide participation of relevant organizations in sustainable development management at the national level through the setting up of sustainable development commissions, councils, fora, and networks as appropriate.	National governments, local authorities as authorities to be taken into account to ensure the participation of relevant organizations in sustainable development	2035

Strategic direction 7.1: Put in place or strengthen structures for sustainable development implementation at national and regional scale, and ensure their adequate resourcing		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
	at National level	
Regional		
7.1.2 Improve the impact of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development in the regional context through strengthening of the administrative and financial support for its operation, in particular by strengthening the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit as the Commission Secretariat for it to be able to coordinating the implementation and monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 and the regular reporting on progress.	UNEP/MAP	2035
7.1.3 Enlarge the MCSD participants as observers to ensure the participation of a larger number of relevant international organizations and stakeholder groups including women and youth from the Mediterranean region involved in sustainable development processes.	Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, UNEP/MAP UFM, WestMed Initiative, EUSAIR macro regional strategy, Interreg Euro-Med, Interreg Next South, Interreg Adrion, Ocean Mission,	[Ongoing]
7.1.4 Enhance coordination at the regional level between related frameworks in order to acknowledge the MSSD as the overarching Strategic Reference document for the region.	Mediterranean Committee on ESD Action Plan	
7.1.5. Improve visibility and outreach of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development and the MSSD, with the support of a communication strategy, particularly within the United Nations system, such as within the Conferences of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention and at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development, to complement the four-yearly ministerial sessions on sustainable development at the Conference of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention.	Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, UNEP/MAP	2035
7.1.6. Ensure that the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development fulfils its role in promoting the exchange of good practices and networking in areas relevant to its remit on sustainable development, as well as through appointing 'champions' where relevant.	Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, UNEP/MAP	2035

169. The second strategic direction in this section focuses on establishing mechanisms for management of sustainable development processes, in particular the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 at the regional level (strategic direction 7.2). The actions recommended take on board the understanding that policies and strategies exist within a policy cycle, beginning with policy formulation and continuing with policy implementation and monitoring and then policy review.

Strategic direction 7.2: Establish regional processes for the implementation and monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
Regional		
7.2.1 Ensure that the regular programmes of work of UNEP/MAP allocate the necessary resources for leading the implementation and monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035	Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, UNEP/MAP, Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention	2035
7.2.2 Strengthen the support of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development to national/local authorities	UNEP/MAP	2035
7.2.3 Undertake a participatory mid- term and final evaluations of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable 2026-2035 based on the first 5 years of data regarding its implementation, using indicators associated with the actions, as well as the proposed dashboard of Sustainability Indicators.	UNEP/MAP	2035
7.2.4 Review the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 issuing a new Strategy for the period 2036-2045, based on the MSSD final evaluation.	UNEP/MAP	2035

4.2. Financing the implementation of the Strategy

170. Implementation of the Strategy, based on the ambitious but necessary and realistic vision of establishing a sustainable Mediterranean on strong economic and social foundations, needs significant financial resources. The resources for financing the Strategy implementation cannot and should not be expected to come from only one or a few sources. It is, again, a collective effort, through which the sum will be much greater than the addition of the parts, thanks to the synergies developed and economies of scale achieved.

171. In that sense, the national budgets of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, allocating funds for the implementation of strategic targets aligned with the Strategy and the mobilization of resources for participation in regional and sub-regional actions aligned with the Strategy can significantly assist in promoting implementation, while at the same time serving national objectives and policies

172. The private sector needs to be in a central place of this process. By mobilizing resources for its own research, development and integration of technologies into the production process, and shifting some of the resources invested annually in marketing and promotion activities, it can play a very significant role in critically strengthening the process of implementation. For that purpose, the UNEP/MAP system, as well as the Contracting Parties and other stakeholders, such as civil society, need to develop close working relations with the private sector and construct a platform of trust and synergy through which 'win-win' collaborations will be established for the implementation of actions in the context of the Strategy.

173. Strategic direction 7.3 addresses the need to strengthen capacity for financing the Strategy. The first action in this regard relates to the development of a project portfolio drawn from the Strategy to support fundraising activities. The second action relates to the provision of capacity-building workshops on fundraising. In addition, the Strategy recommends the creation of an investment facility for sustainable development implementation in the Mediterranean, involving international financial institutions, development banks, the European Union and bilateral donor agencies. Finally, the Strategy encourages private sector to engage with civil society and foster greater corporate social responsibility.

Strategic direction 7.3: Strengthen capacity for financing the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
Regional		
7.3.1. Build a project portfolio aimed at supporting the implementation of Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development actions, and associate possible funding sources with the portfolio.	UNEP/MAP	2030
7.3.2. Provide capacity-building workshops to national governments and stakeholders, as well as sub-regional bodies in fundraising to improve their access to funding.	UNEP/MAP, UFM, National and Regional Parliaments, other regional and international organizations/initiatives/programmes, WES/BCA, INTERREG Med/PRIMA Programmes	2035
7.3.3. Mapping funding opportunities and develop a MSSD funding strategy and create an investment facility for sustainable development implementation in the Mediterranean, involving international financial institutions, development banks, the European Union and bilateral donor agencies, as well as engaging with the private sector	UNEP/MAP, regional and international organizations, national governments, European Union, WB, EBRD, EIB	2035

4.3. Monitoring system and a regional dashboard on the implementation of the Strategy

174. A comprehensive monitoring system and relevant indicators are necessary to assess the implementation of the Strategy. This is done using the MSSD dashboard indicators.

175. The set of indicators monitor the progress of sustainable development issues are available online (<https://wesr.unep.org/article/dashboard>), on an interactive way. The MSSD Dashboard indicators should be subject to regular update.

176. The implementation of the Strategy is subject to an independent Mid-Term evaluation in 2030 that should take into account the forthcoming global sustainability framework and recommend the necessary directions as appropriate.

177. The Strategy is subject to a final evaluation in 2035. Both evaluations should be independent, participatory and inclusive involving the MCSD members, partners and stakeholders and be accompanied by an updated evaluation of the MSSD Dashboard indicators to assess sustainability trends.

178. On the existing reporting systems and through countries involvement, strong partnerships with regional and national experts and stakeholders, Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols are encouraged to proceed with periodic evaluation of the Strategy and its dashboard to timely consider the regular update of national and regional datasets, while it will allow precise and up to date analysis of the progress towards the sustainable development of the region based on the sustainability dashboard, utilizing on primary basis the data from already existing reliable sources.

Strategic direction 7.4: Ensure the regular monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035		
Actions	Responsible Actors	Time Frame
National		
7.4.1. Provide data on a biannual basis for monitoring the Strategy, reporting on the progress of the MSSD biannually	National governments, regional organizations, UNEP/MAP	2035
Regional		
7.4.2. Ensure that the Strategy monitoring systems are built taking into account the existing and planned data-sharing and information systems of the MAP, complementing with the potential of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development meetings for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy using breakout groups.	UNEP/MAP, National governments, regional organizations, Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, UNEP/MAP	2035
7.4.3 Update and populate the dashboard of sustainability indicators for the Mediterranean, with the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development playing an advisory role in the selection process.	UNEP/MAP, Plan Bleu, Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development	2035

MSSD Objective	Flagship Initiative	Partners
Objective 1 Address climate change with emphasis on adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority	Regional science-policy interface mechanism to prepare consolidated regional scientific assessments on climate change trends, impacts and adaptation and mitigation options (MedEcc)	UNEP/MAP, Plan Bleu/RAC, UfM
	Launching of educational initiatives (e.x. Mediterranean ESD Network: Platform for collaboration among schools, universities, and civil societies Mediterranean Green Skills Program: Training for youth and women in sustainable business practices)	CYPRUS, Mediterranean Committee on Education and Sustainable Development, WES/BCA
	Delivering 1TW of renewable energy capacity in the Mediterranean by 2030 (TERAMED)	ECOUNION and RAED, Regional governments, international organizations, private sector stakeholders, and civil society groups

MSSD Objective	Flagship Initiative	Partners
Objective 2 Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems	Achieving 30 by 30 MPAs/ OECMs Targets (Update of MEDFUND Flagship Initiative)	SPA/RAC Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation; Oceanographic Institute – Prince Albert 1st of Monaco Foundation ; UNEP/MAP Specially Protected Area Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC); Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund; MedPAN; WWF Mediterranean; IUCN Centre for Mediterranean cooperation; French coastal protection agency Conservatoire du Littoral; Mediterranean Small Islands Initiative, MedPAN is the network of Mediterranean marine protected area managers.

MSSD Objective	Flagship Initiative	Partners
	Mediterranean Coast Day	PAP/RAC UNEP/MAP and Regional Activity Centres under the Barcelona Convention System Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention UNEP Regional Seas Programme & Regional Seas UNESCO UNEP/MAP— Barcelona Convention system Partners (IGOs and NGOs) Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ocean & Climate Platform International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) WWF-Mediterranean Mediterranean Information Office for the Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MiO-ESCEDE) MedWet Initiative MED SEA Foundation ARTPORT_making waves

MSSD Objective	Flagship Initiative	Partners
	Promote the IUCN Green list standard in riparian states to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of parks managing bodies created (IUCN Green list)	IUCN-Green List Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Spain.
	Promote the protection and conservation of Seagrass/Posidonia Meadows as crucial ecosystem (Seagrass/Posidonia Meadows)	SPA/RAC The French Biodiversity Agency (OFB), IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, WWF Mediterranean, The Mediterranean Posidonia Network Countries: France, Tunisia, Spain, Malta, Cyprus, Algeria, Türkiye, Italy, Greece.
Objective 3 Promote sustainable resource management, especially water, food security and	Strategy for the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus (WEFE Nexus) in the Mediterranean Source to Sea continuum (WEFE NEXUS)	UfM; DG MENA/DG ENEST; UNEP/MAP; Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) Water and Environment Support mechanism (WES/BCA) Project PRIMA Partnership for Research & Innovation in the Mediterranean area

MSSD Objective	Flagship Initiative	Partners
systems through sustainable forms of rural development	Mediterranean Forest Initiative	UNEP, FAO and UNDRR UfM, EFIMed, Partner countries of the Mediterranean, Barcelona Convention, UNEP/MAP RACs, Mio-ECSDE, IUCN, CEDARE, Observatory of the Sahara and the Sahel (OSS)
Objective 4 Plan-and manage sustainable, resilient Mediterranean cities	Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award	UNEP/MAP MedCities
	Mediterranean Network of Zero Net Cities	UNEP/MAP MedCities Countries: Contracting parties of the Barcelona Convention, starting for example with the countries of the winner cities of previous 4 IEFCA editions: Izmir, Genoa, Malaga, Ashdod Interested Mediterranean Cities from the 112 NetZeroCities, starting by MedCities members, such as Barcelona, València, Marseille, Rome, Limassol and Izmir Other interested cities: Athens, Tirana, as e.g. Signatories of the Covenant of Mayors PAP/RAC Plan Bleu/RAC and SCP/RAC

MSSD Objective	Flagship Initiative	Partners
	Sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean (MedUrbanTools)	MedCities, Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB)
Objective 5 Accelerate transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance	Create and promote a Mediterranean business award for environmental innovation (WeMedBusiness Award)	SCP/RAC, UNEP/MAP
	Sustainable blue tourism	ECO-UNION and IDDRI CSOs: Plan Bleu/RAC, IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation. Supportive Countries: France, Spain Implementing countries: Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Montenegro.
Objective 6 Improve governance at all levels, cooperation	Encourage the adoption and implementation of the Aarhus Convention	MIO-ECSDE COMPSUD MEPIELAN UNECE Aarhus Convention secretariat, UNEP/MAP, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM (Committee on Energy, Environment and Water),

MSSD Objective	Flagship Initiative	Partners
and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.	Women leadership for SDGs in the Mediterranean	UNEP/MAP, women representatives of MCSD members PAM Women Parliamentary Forum Countries: France, Slovenia (Current Bureau Chair), Egypt (Next Bureau Chair), Algeria (hosting of 2024 Mediterranean Coast Day), etc UFM Plan Bleu/RAC, PAP/RAC and INFO/RAC Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED) ASCAME EPLO CPMR-InterMediterranean Commission OECD – Istanbul Centre

MSSD Objective	Flagship Initiative	Partners
	Youth involvement in MSSD decision process and implementation	Mediterranean Youth Group IECD –J-Med NGOs involved in the implementation of SDGs, Med sustainable development in the Med Sea (Mediterranean SOS Network (MedSOS) – Greece; Amici della Terra Italia (Friends of the Earth Italy) – Italy; L'Association de Sauvegarde de la Nature et de l'Environnement (ASNE) – Tunisia; RAED (Arab Network for Environment and Development) – Egypt; DOTO (Diaries of the ocean) - Lebanon Med Countries INFO/RAC Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) MIO-ECSDE Anna Lindh Foundation Académie des Talents Méditerranéens
	Mediterranean Green Week	UFM, UNEP/MAP

MSSD Objective	Flagship Initiative	Partners
	Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development	MIO-ECSDE Cyprus (chair), Greece, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Bureau of the Mediterranean Committee of ESD, international/regional organizations
	Establish a publicly-accessible Mediterranean integrated information system through a triumvirate of national governments, international institutions and the private sector to collate and transparently display information on the state of Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean. Observatory on Environment and Sustainable Development	Plan Bleu, Tunisia, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Türkiye

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