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Mid-Term Review of the UNEP Project “Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hotspots and Measuring Progress to Impacts” (August 2024)

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UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2024

Mid-Term Review of the UNEP Project

Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hot Spots and Measuring Progress to Impacts



August 2024



This report has been prepared by an external consultant as part of a Mid-Term Review, which is a management-led process to assess performance at the project's mid-point. The UNEP Evaluation Office provides templates and tools to support the review process. The findings and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Member States or the UN Environment Programme Senior Management.

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Mid-Term Review of the UNEP/GEF project "Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hot Spots and Measuring Progress to Impacts"

(GEF Project ID: 9684)
(Date 07/2024)

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This Mid-Term Review Report was prepared for UNEP/GEF by Dalibor Kysela.

The reviewer would like to express their gratitude to all persons met and who contributed to this review, as listed in Annex II.

In particular, the reviewer would like to thank the Medprogramme PCU members, namely Mr. Mohamad Kayyal, Ms. Olfat Hamdan, Ms. Maren Mellendorf, as well as Mr. Jordi Moles Matinero from MedWaves, for their contribution and collaboration throughout the review process.

The review consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to the successful finalisation of the current project, formulation of a next phase and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

BRIEF EXTERNAL CONSULTANT BIOGRAPHY

Dalibor Kysela (MSc., Dipl. Ing.) is an independent consultant with 25+ years of experience in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes on industrial, communal and health care waste management, river basin and coastal management, renewable energy and energy efficiency, and environmental monitoring. Throughout his professional carrier, Mr. Kysela served in three UN agencies, namely UNIDO, IAEA and UNDP. In retirement, he acts as independent consultant for evaluation and implementation of development assistance projects implemented by various agencies of the UN system.

ABOUT THE REVIEW

Joint Review: No

Report Language: English

Review Type: Mid-term Review

Brief Description: This report is a management-led Mid Term Review of a UNEP/GEF project implemented between 2020 and 2024. The project's overall development goal is to achieve measurable reductions in levels of POPs and mercury in priority Mediterranean coastal hot spots and catchment areas. This goal is to be achieved through a multi-focal area collaboration between the respective two project components related to the GEF Chemicals and Waste and International Waters focal areas.

The review assesses the project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determines outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, the GEF and the relevant agencies in the project participating countries.

Key words: POPs, PCBs, mercury, waste management, marine environments;

Primary data collection period: April – June 2024

Field mission dates: 10-15 June 2024 (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and 17-22 June 2024 (Tunisia)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASM	Annual Stocktaking Meeting
BRS	Basel-Rotterdam-Stockholm
CETI	Centre for Eco-Toxicological Investigations
CI	Common Indicator
CIEMAT	Centro de Investigaciones Energéticas, Medioambientales y Tecnológicas
CP	Child Project
CW	Chemicals and Waste
EA	Executive Agency
EP	Executing Partner
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
EOP	End-of-Project
GEB	Global Environmental Benefits
GRID	Global Resource Information Database
HBOD	Hexabromocyclododecane
HEIS	Hydro-Engineering Institute Sarajevo
IA	Implementing Agency
IW	International Waters
MAP	Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme
MAP	Mediterranean Action Plan
MC	Minamata Convention
MEAs	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
MED QSR	Mediterranean Quality Status Report
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid-Term Review
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NBB	National Baseline Budget
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PCBs	Polychlorinated Biphenyls
PCU	Project Coordinating Unit
PFD	Programme Framework Document
PFOS	Perfluorooctane Sulfonic Acid
PIR	Project Implementation Reports
PMC	Project Management Costs
POPs	Persistent Organic Pollutants
PRC	Project Review Committee
PRF	Project Results Framework
ProDoc	Project Document (must be reviewed by PRC before any project can be undertaken, with the approval of the managing division director)
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SCCPs	Short-Chain Chlorinated Paraffins
SCP/RAC	Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production
DG	Sustainable Development Goals

SSFA	Small Scale Funding Agreement
TDA	Transboundary Diagnostic Assessment
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNON	United Nations Office in Nairobi
UNOPS	United Nations Office of Project Services

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1: Project Summary

GEF Project ID/SMA ID:	33512			
Implementing Agency (UNEP Division/Branch/Unit):	UNEP Industry and Economy Division (C&W focal area) and UNEP Ecosystems (IW focal area)	Executing Agency:		UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP)
Sources of Funding (Co-finance):	Country (ies):		Institution Name/Type:	
Relevant SDG(s):	SDG 12			
MTS (at approval):		UNEP approval date:	2 March 2020	
POW Output(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022)	POW Output:	POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022):	POW Expected Accomplishment:	
Sub-programme:	Chemicals and pollution action	Programme Coordination Project:		
UNEP approval date:	2 March 2020	GEF approval date:	21 January 2020	
GEF Operational Programme #:		GEF Strategic Priority:		
Project type:	Full Size Project	Focal Area(s):	Chemicals and Waste, International Waters	
Expected start date:		Actual start date:	7 May 2020	
Planned completion date:	31 March 2025	Actual operational completion date:		
Planned total project budget at approval:	14,250,000 US\$	Actual total expenditures reported as of 31 March 2024:	5,983,343.85 US\$	
GEF grant allocation:	114,030,000 US\$	GEF grant expenditures reported as of 03/2024:	5,983,343.85 US\$	
Expected Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	53,146,727 US\$	Secured Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	Not provided	
No. of formal project revisions:	n/a	Date of last approved project revision:	n/a	
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	4	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	5 March 2024	
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (planned date):	September 2023	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	April – August 2024	
Coverage - Country(ies):	Albania, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Turkey	Coverage - Region(s):		
Dates of previous project phases:	n/a	Status of future project phases:	n/a	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

1. The objective of the UNEP/GEF project “Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hot Spots and Measuring Progress to Impacts” (GEF ID 9684) is to achieve measurable reductions in levels of POPs and mercury in priority Mediterranean coastal hot spots and catchment areas to be achieved through a multi-focal area collaboration between the respective two project components related to the GEF Chemicals and Waste and International Waters focal areas. It is the Child Project 1.1 of the regional Mediterranean Sea Programme.

This Review

2. This document presents the final report for the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the MedProgramme Child Project 1.1 “Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hot Spots and Measuring Progress to Impacts”. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy, MTRs are undertaken approximately half-way through the project implementation to analyse whether the project is on track, what problems and challenges the project is encountering and which corrective actions are required.
3. As a standard requirement for all projects financed by GEF, this MTR was initiated by the Implementing Agency, in this case the UNEP Industry and Economy Division.
4. The purpose of this MTR is to assess the project performance to date (in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, determine the likelihood of the project delivering the planned outputs and achieving its intended outcomes. It covers all activities undertaken in the framework of the project since the official start of the project implementation in April 2020.

Key Findings

5. The particular strength of the project design is the aim to develop linkages between the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions and their delivery mechanisms at national and regional level for capacity on chemicals and waste to be linked across thematic and sectoral boundaries. The justification of the project is based on the fundamental and pressing issue linking environmental quality and human health.
6. By focusing on the Barcelona Convention processes and its governance mechanisms, the project offers a framework for the regional cooperation with the potential to consolidate all the information derived from various fragmented initiatives implemented in the Mediterranean and produce a comprehensive and coherent diagnostic focused on transboundary issues. Another strength of the project is its focus on harmonization of the existing data platforms, monitoring protocols and common indicators to comply with the Barcelona Convention's ecosystem approach-based Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP).
7. The linking of the Chemicals and Waste and International Waters components under the umbrella of a single Child Project was driven by the aim to see how the reduction of land-based pollution by POPs and mercury is reflected in reduced environmental stress and improved status of coastal waters in the Mediterranean.
8. The above underlying idea of the project is at the same time also its main weakness as it aims to combine interventions on scattered land-based pollution hotspots as purely national initiatives with very few possibilities for regional grouping with transboundary assessment of the marine ecosystem as essentially regional in nature. Moreover, reduction of land-based pollution and work on transboundary issues in coastal regions

involve different stakeholders and face dissimilar technical as well as political challenges.

9. The project is on track for delivery of the two waste reduction outputs under Component 1 in terms of management and safe disposal of PCBs and management and safe storage of mercury waste (Outputs 1.1 and 1.2), although the progress has been relatively slow as a result of the initial delays in contracting the waste removal services and time-consuming procedures for obtaining all documentation required in line with the provisions of the Basel Convention.
10. On the contrary, the progress on the two outputs addressing prevention of waste has been only marginal, in particular on Output 1.4 dealing with prevention of mercury waste. The project is behind the planned schedule, and it is likely that it will not achieve the planned waste prevention target by the original project completion date (end of March 2025). Recently, the project got approved extension until March 2026.
11. While there has been visible progress towards development of three out of four outputs of Component 2, these are general outputs not directly linked to identification of impacts of the specific land-based pollution reduction addressed through the waste reduction and prevention outputs of Component 1. Implementation of the fourth output that is based on analysis and compilation of information generated under Component 1 has not started yet.
12. Despite invitations to PSC meetings included GEF Focal Points and the Project Focal Points, representation in the PSC meetings of national focal institutions involved in the International Waters part of the project was weak for several countries. Consequently, discussion at the PSC meetings has almost exclusively focussed on implementation of the Chemicals and Waste part of the project with almost non-existent focus on links and cooperation between the two project components.
13. The project reporting has been conducted in line with the requirements of GEF and the progress reports found to be sufficiently detailed and the reporting formats in compliance with the UNEP and GEF reporting standards. In general, the project reporting ensured transparent information flow across the executing partners and the project key stakeholders.
14. However, access of the MTR consultant to various project-related documents, such as workplans, budget revisions, terms of references, contracts and their deliverables, was possible only on basis of ad-hoc requests as there is no repository of the relevant project documentation required for the MTR.
15. The project's financial resources have been managed in compliance with relevant UNEP/GEF financial management standards and procedures. The project financial information broken down by components and years of implementation was available for the MTR. However, information on actually realised co-financing by the project partners and beneficiary has not been systematically tracked during the project implementation.

Conclusions

16. The project has successfully enabled collaboration among a large set of stakeholders, including high ranking national authorities and educational/research institutions. It has also taken advantage of complementarities with parallel projects implemented by sister UN agencies in several participating countries and achieved thus synergies and faster progress towards the planned results while making savings on project financial resources.
17. Furthermore, the project has been successful in building ownership, interest and commitment of the participating government institutions and stakeholders despite

political challenges in few project countries and related difficulties in planning and execution of specific activities in those countries. However, the very slow progress towards ratification of the Minamata Convention in two project countries hampers implementation of specific activities on mercury waste disposal.

18. The effectiveness of implementation was affected by Covid-19 pandemic in the first year of the project, slow and complicated procurement of waste disposal services, lack of coordination at the level of some participating countries, as well as by temporary shortfall of staffing at the Project Coordination Unit. The project team has taken several steps of adaptive management in order to address the above issues.
19. The project is now at the start of the 5th and last year of implementation. Due to the combined effect of covid-19 restrictions in the 1st year and slow progress of work on delivery of some sub-components in the following years, several project activities were delayed and/or modified. Despite several adaptive management measures of the project team, the delivery of some outputs has been slower than expected. The executing partners expressed uncertainty whether all activities for delivery of planned results could be completed within the remaining time period of the project. Therefore, extension of the project will be proposed under recommendations.
20. Based on the findings from this review, the project has demonstrated strong performance in the areas of adaptive management, reporting and communication. Areas that require attention in the remaining project time period include delivery of POPs and mercury waste prevention outputs, monitoring of co-financing information, as well as links between the institutions involved in the CW and IW components at the level of participating countries.

Lessons Learned

21. Lesson 1: Experience from implementation of the project has demonstrated the need for full staffing of the dedicated PCU to ensure timely implementation, reporting and delivery of planned outputs.
22. Lesson 2: The lack of a TOC and 'output to outcome' analysis during the project design resulted in lost opportunities to better test project assumptions and drivers, which would have provided valuable data to inform and refine project implementation strategies and approach.
23. Lesson 3: There are positive and negative aspects of UN-to-UN transfer agreements. For conclusion of such agreements, the UN partner organisations need time for review and approval of specific agreement provisions. While such agreement might meet the needs in case of ineffective coordination structures at the country level, the speed of implementation might be affected by specific rules and regulations of the receiving UN partner.
24. Lesson 4: Weak national stakeholder representation in the PSC for the IW component of the project did not ensure internal coherence and links between the two project components at the level of the participating countries. The national representation should be based on consultations on CP 1.1 at the level of each participating country.
25. Lesson 5: Linking the component comprising concrete measures for reduction of coastal pollution hotspots with a component on general coastal pollution monitoring does not ensure ability to track impacts of the reduced pollution.

Recommendations

26. Recommendation 1: Project extension: The project executing partners should prepare estimates for completion of their respective activities that will serve for preparation of a justified proposal for project extension of at least 6 months to be presented for approval

by the extraordinary PSC meeting in September 2024. This proposal should also include budget revision to cover the increased costs of project management during the project extension period.

27. Recommendation 2: Stakeholder representation: The project executing partners should ensure that representation of all project countries at the PSC meetings includes also national focal institutions responsible for Component 2.
28. Recommendation 3: Budget revision: The Executing Agency (MedPCU) should request approval of the Implementing Agency for revision of the project budget to repurpose part of the budget for mercury disposal for increase of the amount of PCB waste disposed.
29. Recommendation 4: Revision of PRF target: MedProgramme PCU should elaborate justified estimation of quantities of PCB waste that can be realistically disposed of within the remaining project time and budget and prepare a proposal for revised end-of-project target for Output 1.1 for presentation to the next PSC meeting.
30. Recommendation 5: Reporting: The MedProgramme PCU should systematically collect information on the actually realised co-financing broken down by sources of co-financing and report this information in 2024 PIR and subsequent annual PIRs.
31. Recommendation 6: Repository of documents for TE: The MedPCU should systematically compile all documents relevant for the project MTR and TE in line with the "List of Documents for MTR" and store them in a dedicated repository of project documentation available to project evaluators.
32. Recommendation 7: Monitoring of PCB and mercury sites: In order to see direct impacts of the pollution reduction, the project partners should consider support for establishment of pollution monitoring programmes at the PCB- and mercury-contaminated sites.
33. Recommendation 8: PCU strengthening: The MedPCU should strengthen its administrative arm through accelerated recruitment of the Finance Budget Officer and Finance Assistant of the MedPCU.
34. Recommendation 9: Gender assessment: The MedPCU should ensure that the gender specialist recruited by UNOPS conducts assessment of implementation of the CP 1.1 Gender Action Plan and provide recommendations for a more targeted approach of future interventions so that these can benefit from the gender-responsive actions and capacity building.

I. PROJECT OVERVIEW

35. The Mediterranean Sea - the largest semi-enclosed sea in the world - is shared by 21 countries and its coastal areas are undergoing a dramatic process of development. As a result of the increased demand for space, water and natural resources, the stress on coastal ecosystems and the infringement on natural and agricultural land is continuously increasing.
36. Eighty per cent of the pollution load of the Mediterranean Sea originates from land-based sources, mainly in the form of untreated discharges of urban waste (which includes microbiological, nutrient and chemical contaminants) and releases of untreated industrial wastewater. Lack of sewage collection, as well as insufficient treatment and disposal infrastructures remain to be the greatest challenge in many Mediterranean countries. To add to this, agricultural practices cause significant soil erosion and pesticide pollution of surface and groundwater resources, consequently affecting the coastal and marine ecosystems. Uncontrolled coastal development, population expansion and increasing coastal tourism, unregulated and often unsustainable freshwater extraction from coastal aquifers, are among the greatest threats to the marine and coastal ecosystems.
37. The continued degradation of the Mediterranean coastal zone and marine environments, coupled with the urgent growing impacts of climate variability, the loss of livelihoods and dramatic deterioration of social conditions along critical sections of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean shores, prompted the development of the Mediterranean Sea Programme: Enhancing Environmental Security (MedProgramme) representing the first GEF programmatic multifocal area initiative in the Mediterranean Sea. Its eight Child Projects cut across four different Focal Areas of the GEF and involve a wide spectrum of developmental and societal sectors.
38. Child Project 1.1 contributes to the MedProgramme Component 1: Reduction of Land-Based Pollution in Priority Coastal Hotspots and Measuring Progress to Impacts. The project focuses on land-based sources of hazardous chemicals pollution, namely Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) controlled under the Stockholm Convention, and mercury addressed under the Minamata Convention. Partner Child Projects 1.2 and 1.3 focus on wastewater as a source of excess nutrient pollution to the Mediterranean.
39. Objective/Outcome of the Child Project 1.1 is to achieve measurable reductions in levels of POPs and mercury in priority Mediterranean coastal hot spots and catchment areas to be achieved through a multi-focal area collaboration between the respective two project components related to the GEF Chemicals and Waste and International Waters focal areas.
40. Component 1 was designed to assist participating countries on the provision of disposal options (for POPs) and long-term containment (for mercury), as well as on raising awareness about new POPs in products and mercury in the healthcare sector and introduce alternatives through targeted pilot activities. It is envisaged these activities will lead to environmentally sound management and disposal of PCB containing waste, safe containment of mercury and mercury-containing waste, as well as to reduction in use of new POPs and mercury in the region via a transition to environmentally sound alternatives.
41. Component 2 aims at strengthening regional cooperation frameworks through the project interventions identifying priorities and actions that will lead to increased environmental and socioeconomic benefits in the Mediterranean. Specifically, the assistance is rendered for update of the 2005 baseline with regard to priority transboundary issues that affect the state of marine and coastal environments and

analysis of their causes and impacts of identified priority issues. The expected results comprise enhanced capacities for monitoring and reporting that enable (in conjunction with other MedProgramme projects and components) the assessment of progress towards stress reduction impacts and achievement of relevant SDG targets.

42. In terms of Global Environmental Benefits (GEB), the project target is to dispose of over 2,000 tons of POPs, preventing their future release into the environment. The target also comprises repackaging and disposal of over 50 tonnes of mercury and mercury contaminated waste, preventing thus future release into the environment. Any stocks of obsolete new POPs identified may be disposed along with the other POPs wastes, thus counting towards the GEB target.

Table 2: Project budget

Component/Outcome (All figures as USD)	GEF budget at design	Co-financing at design
Component 1 / Outcome 1	11,122,000	43,704,097
Component 2 / Outcome 2	2,908,000	8,577,120
Total for substantive outcomes	14,030,000.00	52,281,217

43. The project is organized in two substantive and one support project components for achievement of three outcomes and total ten expected outputs.

Table 3: Project outcomes and outputs

Component/Outcome	Expected outputs
Outcome 1. Reduction of harmful chemicals and waste (POPs and mercury) in coastal hotspots and catchment areas	1.1: Management and disposal of 2,000 tonnes of POPs 1.2: Management and safe storage of 50 tonnes of mercury wastes 1.3: New POPs reduction and alternatives pilot projects completed 1.4: Mercury reduction through pilot activities on mercury alternatives
Outcome 2: Littoral countries enabled to identify trends and progress to impacts	2.1: Updated TDA including gender assessment 2.2: Report on progress to impacts 2.3: Offshore monitoring strategy and identification of 20 locations for the offshore monitoring stations 2.4: Data sharing policy for the Mediterranean
Outcome 3: Project results and knowledge are effectively disseminated and used to adaptively manage the project	3.1 Knowledge Management strategy shares knowledge from Child Project 1.1 3.2 Regular monitoring and evaluation of project progress and results

II. REVIEW METHODS

44. The MTR adheres to the UNEG Norms and Standards¹ as well as to the guidance, rules and procedures stipulated in the GEF Evaluation Policy². The MTR process was based on a participatory and collaborative approach ensuring close engagement with internal and external project stakeholders with the aim to provide evidence-based information that is reliable and useful based on predetermined objective evaluation criteria.
45. The MTR used a mixed-method approach to collect both quantitative and qualitative data through various data collection methods and ensure triangulation and validation of data collected from different sources for enhanced credibility of MTR findings, conclusions and recommendations. The data was collected from primary sources (stakeholder interviews, project document outputs, project progress reports, etc.) as well as from secondary sources (literature review, nationally published data, relevant evaluation reports, etc.).
46. As an initial step and part of MTR Inception Report preparation, screening and a limited desk review was conducted of essential documents mainly those covering project design and implementation progress. The approved Project Document (ProDoc) was the starting point for the review in terms of understanding the basics on which the project was designed and funded. Study of the ProDoc was complemented by the review of other essential information sources such as the Minutes of the Inception Workshop and the annual GEF Project Implementation Reports (PIRs).
47. As the next step, the evaluator conducted a detailed review and analysis of the available project substantive and financial progress reports, as well as other documents relevant for the MTR, including documents from similar and complementary initiatives, as well as reports on the specific context of the project.
48. Collection of first-hand information about the project implementation was conducted through semi-structured interviews with a representative selection of project stakeholders. The interviews were designed to solicit responses to a set of predetermined open-ended questions aiming to obtain in-depth information about the key informants' experiences from the project implementation, their attitudes, and preferences, as well as their opinions on the progress towards achievement of the planned results. The semi-structured format of the interviews allowed the respondents to express their perception of the main issues related to the project implementation.
49. Draft interview questions are provided in Annex C of the Inception Report. The MTR criteria and the questions will be used as a check list to raise eventual additional and/or more specific questions on the issues mentioned. Triangulation of results, i.e. comparing information from different sources, such as documentation and interviews, or interviews on the same subject with different stakeholders, were used to corroborate or check the reliability of evidence. This approach verified the information obtained in the document review phase, got some missing data and informed about the opinion of stakeholders and project participants to interpret the information. The interviews also served the purpose of collecting additional contextual documents to support the evidence base of the evaluation.
50. Detailed MTR mission plans to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Tunisia were prepared upon discussion with the respective project national focal points and the MedProgramme Coordination Unit.

¹ Norms and Standards for Evaluation, UNEG (2016)

² GEF Evaluation Policy, GEF/ME/C.56/02/Rev.01

51. After the data collection phase, data analysis followed as the final phase of the MTR. This step was conducted in a systematic manner that involves organizing and classifying the information collected, tabulating it, summarizing it, and comparing the results with other appropriate information to extract useful information that responds to the evaluation questions and fulfils the purposes of the MTR. It is the process ensuring accuracy of the collected information and translating the data into usable formats or units of analysis related to each evaluation question.
52. Progress towards the results of the project was measured against the performance indicators specified in the Project Results Framework. Relevant financial data (planned, actually committed, actually spent at outcome level) were analysed and compared with the implementation progress data against the performance indicators. This stage of the MTR assessed preliminary indications of potential impact and sustainability of results including the contribution to capacity development and progress towards achievement of sustainable development goals.
53. Based on the classified findings, the MTR drew a set of conclusions and elaborated actionable recommendations for the project. Moreover, the MTR compiled lessons learnt and best practices from the initial implementation period in order to inform the remaining phase of the project implementation.

III. THEORY OF CHANGE

Theory of Change at Review

Original Theory of Change

54. The original Theory of Change of the CP 1.1 was supposed to set a logical pathway for the intervention. It was prepared during the project formulation phase and is included as Annex A to the Project Document. It consists of two substantive outcomes and eight outputs, as well as one supporting outcome with two outputs. It served as a basis for formulation of the project results framework (PRF).

55. Outcome 1: Reduction of harmful chemicals and waste (POPs and mercury) in coastal hotspots and catchment areas.

The stated outputs for Outcome 1 were as follows:

Output 1.1: Management and disposal of 2,000 tonnes of POPs;

Output 1.2: Management and safe storage of 50 tonnes of mercury wastes;

Output 1.3: New POPs reduction and alternatives pilot projects completed;

Output 1.4: Mercury reduction through pilot activities on mercury alternatives

56. Outcome 2: Littoral countries enabled to identify trends and progress to impacts.

Output 2.1: Updated TDA including gender assessment;

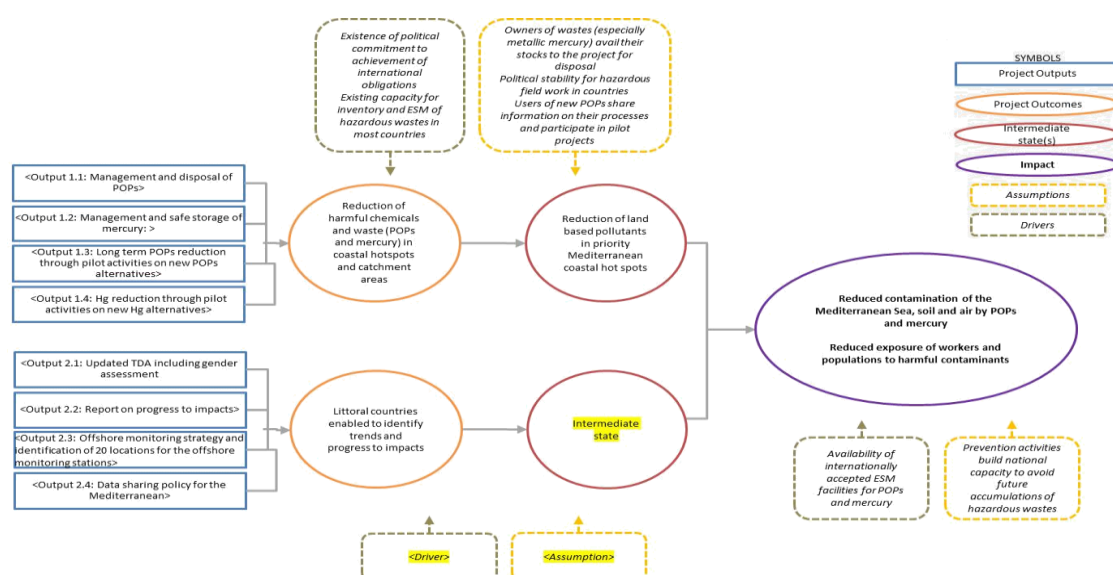
Output 2.2: Report on progress to impacts;

Output 2.3: Offshore monitoring strategy and identification of 20 locations for offshore monitoring;

Output 2.4: Data sharing policy for the Mediterranean stations

57. Annex B of the Project Document contains a Problem Tree that covers only Outcome 1, as well as the Theory of Change diagram. The latter is provided as Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: The original Theory of Change (source – approved Project Document)



58. The main weakness of the diagram of the original ToC is that it presents the intermediate state only for Outcome 1 (the upper red oval shape in the middle) while does not define and present the intermediate state for Outcome 2 (the lower red oval shape in the middle). Also, it displays drivers and assumptions (grey and yellow dotted rectangles) formulated

as conditions or factors that need to be in place for the project to work only for Outcome 1.

59. The original TOC does not sufficiently present the causal pathway from the outputs, through direct outcomes (changes in the project stakeholders' behaviour) and intermediate states towards the desired impact and is thus not sufficiently coherent to capture the complexity of the desired changes that need to be realised.

Reconstructed Theory of Change

60. Based on the above analysis of the ToC, the evaluator reconstructed the Theory of Change to better capture the complexity of the intervention logic, re-establish the logical chain and contribution of outputs under Outcome 2 and further to the intermediate states and impact. As the formulation of Outputs 2.3 and 2.4 in the original ToC was found vague, these were reformulated in order to ensure the internal consistency of formulation within the results chain under Outcome 2.

61. Table 4 below outlines the originally proposed linkages between the Project outcomes and outputs as set out within the Project Document and compares them with the Reconstructed TOC as proposed by the evaluator.

Table 4: Comparison of results between the Project Document PRF and the reconstructed ToC

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC	Justification for Reformulation
(LONG LASTING) IMPACT		
Reduced contamination of the Mediterranean Sea, soil and air by POPs and mercury	Moved under Intermediary State for Component 1	This is an intermediary state leading to reduced exposure
Reduced exposure of workers and populations to harmful contaminants	No change	As formulated in the ProDoc
Component 1		
INTERMEDIATE STATE		
Reduction of land-based pollutants in priority Mediterranean coastal hot spots	Reduced contamination of the Mediterranean Sea, soil and air by POPs and mercury	The statement originally formulated as Impact describes the Intermediate State as its achievement leads to the above long lasting impact
OUTCOME		
Outcome 1. Reduction of harmful chemicals and waste (POPs and mercury) in coastal hotspots and catchment areas	No change	As formulated in the ProDoc
OUTPUTS		
Outputs 1.1 – 1.4.	No changes	As formulated in the ProDoc
Component 2		
INTERMEDIATE STATE		
Not formulated	Governments and other stakeholders strengthen the regional cooperation for production and exchange of quality data, identification of emerging issues and fostering policy actions	
OUTCOME		
Outcome 2. Littoral countries enabled to identify trends and progress to impacts	Littoral countries able to make informed decision on prioritisation of issues and actions	The original outcome formulation is vague and does not clearly link with the outputs
OUTPUTS		
Outputs 2.1 and 2.2:	No change	As formulated in the ProDoc
Output 2.3: Offshore monitoring strategy and identification of 20 locations for the offshore monitoring stations	Offshore monitoring strategy elaborated based on established offshore monitoring network	The original formulation contains a mix-up of the output definition and the target for measurement of the achievement, does not define the required status

Output 2.4: Data sharing policy for the Mediterranean	Data sharing policy for the Mediterranean adopted and implemented	The original formulation of the output does not define the required status of the deliverable
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62. The Problem Tree diagram in Annex A to the Project Document identified the following 3 priority environmental concerns for Outcome 1 of the project:

- Continued use and release of PCB-contaminated oil;
- Accumulated mercury waste in multiple locations; and
- Continued use of new POPs in products;

63. The same Problem Tree diagram does not list the main environmental concerns for Outcome 2. However, the text of the Project Document contains the following 3 major environmental concerns:

- Lack of common indicators to assess drivers, pressures and responses in a framework of revised TDA;
- Insufficient data due to lack of relevant monitoring programmes on the marine and coastal environment; and
- Lack of integration of the existing national and regional databases and systems of data sharing;

Causal pathways from outputs to outcomes

64. The original project ToC is based on the following assumptions at the outcome level:

- Owners of waste avail their stock to the project for disposal;
- Political stability is sufficient for work with hazardous waste;
- Users of new POPs share information on their processes and participate in pilot projects;

65. The evaluator found these underlying assumptions largely valid, however, it was noted that they stand only for Outcome 1. Two additional relevant assumptions stand for Outcome 1, namely:

- Uncertainty about baseline quantities of POPs and mercury waste will be addressed through inventories and verification of data.;
- Improved collection of data and monitoring of POPs waste supports sound management of contaminated sites;

66. To achieve Outcome 1 through combined delivery of Outputs 1.1 - 1.4, it is assumed not only that owners of waste avail their waste stocks to the project for disposal, but also that uncertainty about baseline quantities of POPs and mercury waste will be addressed through inventories and verification of data.

67. Furthermore, suitable land must be designated for upgrading or construction of temporary storage facilities for POPs waste and the available waste stocks must be safeguarded through construction and/or upgrade of temporary waste storage facilities.

68. The original ToC does not present any assumptions for achievement of Outcome 2. For the purpose of the reconstructed ToC, the main assumptions for achievement of Outcome 2 through combined delivery of Outputs 2.1 – 2.4:

- Improved structure of information and communication technology of the UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention system (InfoMAP);
- Inter-sectoral coordination and law enforcement at the level of the participating countries;
- Integration of data and information from different initiatives;

69. For the purpose of the ToC reconstruction, the following are considered main drivers for progress from outputs to outcomes:

- Political commitment of the governments for compliance with obligations under the Stockholm, Minamata and Barcelona Conventions;
- Governments and owners of waste are convinced of the utility and value of adopting sound environmental management practices;
- Commitment of UNEP and governments to work toward the attainment of SDGs related to waste management and international waters;
- Pressure from coastal communities, media, civil society, and the general public to address the challenge of contamination of water and coastal areas;
- Strong ownership of the project by the country stakeholders due to progress towards mitigation of environmental challenges;

Causal pathways from outcome to intermediate state

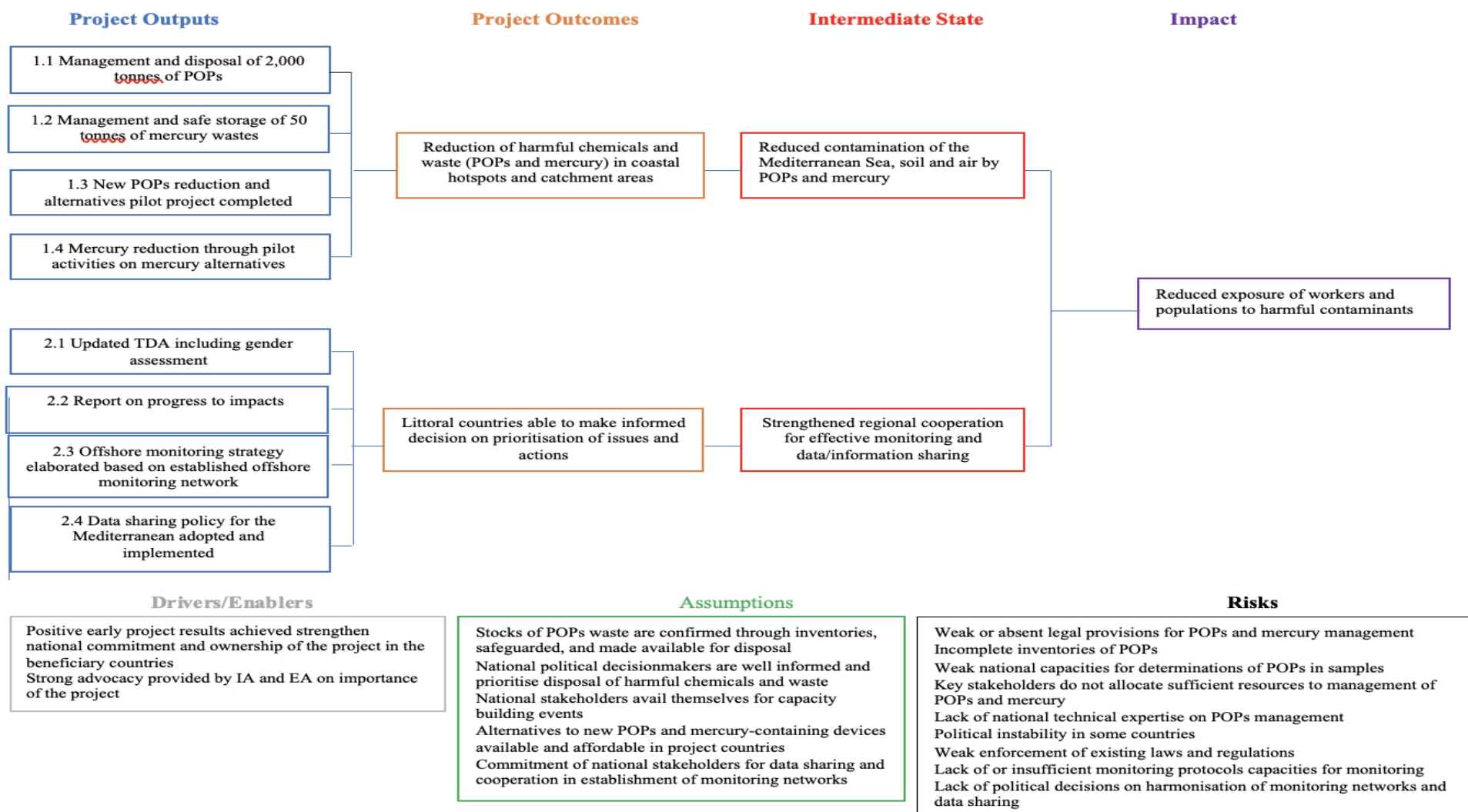
70. The achievement of the intermediate states can be seen as an essential precondition for achievement of the project objective and realisation of the desired project impact.

71. Successful disposal of PCB wastes, containment and safeguarding of mercury wastes, and environmentally sound management of contaminated sites directly lead to achievement of the intermediate state of reduced contamination of the Mediterranean Sea, soil and air by POPs and mercury.

72. Improved water quality assessments and indicator-based reporting with credible data and information, is directly linked to the participation of the project countries in regional water and coastal area monitoring networks. It will reinforce the regional cooperation for production and exchange of quality data, identification of emerging issues and fostering policy actions.

73. Figure 2 below shows the reconstructed Theory of Change.

Figure 2: The reconstructed Theory of Change



IV. REVIEW FINDINGS

A. Strategic Relevance

Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) Strategic Priorities

74. Outputs 1.1 and 1.3 of Component 1 support implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions (BRS), the three Multilateral Environmental Agreements dealing with chemicals and waste. Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) belong to the group of chemicals included among the original twelve POPs covered by the Stockholm Convention and listed in Annexes A and C of the Convention. The 3 new POPs targeted by the project, namely perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), hexabromocyclododecane (HBCD), and short-chain chlorinated paraffins (SCCPs) belong to the 16 new POPs added to Annexes A, B and C of the Stockholm Convention since the 4th Conference of the Parties in 2009. All participating countries of the project are Parties and Signatories to the BRS conventions.
75. Outputs 1.2 and 1.4 are in line with the Minamata Convention that aims at protection of human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury. Since it entered into force in 2017, Albania, Algeria, Lebanon, Montenegro and Türkiye became Parties to the Minamata Convention, while Libya, Morocco and Tunisia are Signatories but not Parties. At the time of preparation of this report, Bosnia and Herzegovina was neither Signatory nor Party to the MC.
76. All four outputs of Component 2 are in line with the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, in particular the Dumping Protocol, Land-Based Source Protocol, and Hazardous Waste Protocol adopted in the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP). Specifically, Output 2.3 supports implementation of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) adopted by the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, in particular the IMAP Ecological Objective 09: Contaminants. All project countries belong to the 22 Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention.
77. Furthermore, the project corresponds with the UNEP mandate to deliver GEF initiatives in relation to the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including support to meet national commitments to relevant MEAs. It contributes to two of the three outcomes of the thematic subprogramme on chemicals and pollution action within the 2022-2025 UNEP Strategy and to the respective GEF-6 programming strategies for Chemicals & Waste and International Waters.
78. Component 1 of the project is aligned with Outcome 1 of the Chemicals and Pollution Action in the UNEP Strategy that calls for optimisation of human health and environmental outcomes through enhanced capacity and leadership in the sound management of chemicals and waste for significant reduction of the harmful effects of chemicals of major public health concern. It also corresponds to Objective 2 of the GEF-6 Chemicals and Waste Focal Area Strategy that aims at reduction of prevalence of harmful chemicals and waste and at support to implementation of clean alternative technologies/substances.
79. Component 2 of the project conforms to Outcome 3 of the Chemicals and Pollution Action in the UNEP Strategy that calls for reduction of pollutants' releases to air, water, soil and the ocean. It also aligns with Objective 3 of the GEF-6 International Waters Focal Area designed to enhance multi-state cooperation, catalyse investments to foster sustainable fisheries, restore and protect coastal habitats, and reduce pollution of coasts and large marine ecosystems.

80. Component 2 of the project also responds to regional initiatives including two regional plans adopted in the framework of the implementation of the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol), namely the Regional Plan on the Reduction of Inputs of Mercury and the Regional Plan on the Phasing out of Perfluorooctane Sulfonic Acid, Its Salts and Perfluorooctane Sulfonyl Fluoride.
81. At the global level, the project is well aligned with the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and contributes to SDG #3: Good health and well-being; SDG #5: Gender equality; SDG #12: Responsible consumption and production; and SDG #17: Partnerships for sustainable development.
82. Based on the above findings, the alignment to UNEP's, donors and country strategic priorities is rated **Satisfactory**.

Rating for Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) Strategic Priorities: Satisfactory

Complementarity/Coherence with Existing Interventions

83. The project was designed to be complementary to several ongoing or planned interventions, including PCB/POPs and mercury disposal projects in the region, demonstrating commitment of governments to meeting their obligations for environmentally sound management of PCB wastes under the Stockholm Convention and mercury wastes under the Minamata Convention. These are summarised in the following Table.

Table 5: Parallel projects implemented for PCB and mercury management

Country	Project Title	Donor	Timeline
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Environmentally Sound Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in industrial and hazardous waste sectors	SIDA	2020-
Lebanon	Minamata Convention Initial Assessment in Lebanon	GEF	2019-2023
	Environmental Pollution Abatement Project	Italy	2014-2022
Montenegro	Comprehensive Environmentally Sound Management of PCBs	GEF	2017-2023
Morocco	Making Polychlorinated Biphenyls Management and Elimination Sustainable in Morocco	GEF	2017-2024
Tunisia	Improve Mercury Management in Tunisia	GEF	2014-2021
Türkiye	Minamata Convention: Initial Assessment in Turkey	GEF	2016-2022
	Remediation of contaminated sites with POPs	EU	2019-2024
Global	International Waters Learning Exchange and Resources Network (IW LEARN)	GEF	2015-2021

84. The design of CP 1.1 shows complementarity of results to other recent and ongoing interventions working in the project countries on the same problem/issue, but no concrete active collaboration is anticipated. Therefore, the complementarity/coherence with existing interventions is rated **Satisfactory**.

Rating for Complementarity/Coherence with Existing Interventions:

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Satisfactory

B. Quality & Revision of Project Design

85. The assessment focused on the quality of the approved ProDoc, its logical framework and Theory of Change.
86. The particular strength of the project design is the aim to develop linkages between the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions and their delivery mechanisms at national and regional level for capacity on chemicals and waste to be linked across thematic and sectoral boundaries. The justification of the project is based on the fundamental and pressing issue linking environmental quality and human health.
87. By focusing on the Barcelona Convention processes and its governance mechanisms, the project offers a framework for the regional cooperation with the potential to consolidate all the information derived from various fragmented initiatives implemented in the Mediterranean and produce a comprehensive and coherent diagnostic focused on transboundary issues. Another strength of the project is the focus on harmonization of existing data platforms, monitoring protocols and indicators to comply with the Barcelona Convention's ecosystem approach-based Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP).
88. The linking of the Chemicals and Waste and International Waters components under the umbrella of a single Child Project was driven by the aim to see how the reduction of land-based pollution by POPs and mercury is reflected in reduced environmental stress and improved status of coastal waters in the Mediterranean.
89. The above underlying idea of the project is at the same time also its main weakness as it aims to combine interventions in the respective fields of land-based pollution in priority coastal hotspots and transboundary assessment of the Mediterranean large marine ecosystem. By nature, interventions on scattered land-based pollution hotspots are purely national initiatives with very few possibilities for regional grouping. On the contrary, transboundary assessment of the marine ecosystem is very important for protection of the marine environment in an array of countries and is therefore essentially regional in nature. Moreover, reduction of land-based pollution and work on Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis in coastal regions involve different stakeholders and face dissimilar technical as well as political challenges. A clear and convincing rationale for addressing these two interventions within the same project is not given.
90. The Project Document encompasses all sections that comprise standard requirements for GEF-funded projects. It contains tables with information on national baselines of the participating countries and description of relevant project baseline scenarios. Furthermore, the project design provides a summary stakeholder analysis, and comprehensive description of stakeholder consultation during the project formulation phase. However, the consultations were held mainly at the level of participating country governments and did not include representatives of communities from the target region.
91. For justification of the proposed alternative scenario, the ProDoc describes the root causes of the existing challenges, makes brief assessment of barriers to their effective addressing at the national and regional level, and provides reasoning for incremental cost of the GEF support.
92. The project consists of two technical components comprising 2 outcomes and total 8 outputs (4 outputs per component), and one non-technical component comprising two respective outputs on knowledge management strategy and on monitoring and evaluation. Total 31 substantive activities were designed for delivery of the two outcomes, with 12 activities for Outcome 1 and 19 activities for Outcome 2.

V. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK

93. The Project Results Framework (PRF) contains the Project Objective, two substantive outcomes outputs, description of the project baselines, definition of performance indicators and related mid-term and end-of-project targets, sources of verification as well as risks and assumptions.
94. Analysis of the PRF shows several inconsistencies with regard to definition of indicators and related mid-term and end-of-project targets. Several indicators and targets do not comply with the SMART³ criteria that are used in monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the indicators chosen are well-defined and can be effectively measured to track progress towards specific goals and objectives, as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Analysis of PRF indicators and targets

Result	Indicator	MTR/EOP Targets	Comment
Output 1.2	Number of EMPs approved for stockpiles and contaminated sites	4 EMPs drafted for mercury waste removal	The target does not match the indicator
Output 1.3	No of trained staff applying new POPs approaches	None	Target not defined
Output 1.4	No of detailed national mercury stock-takes at hospitals and HCFs No. of pilot project approaches developed to replace mercury in health care	2 national inventories of mercury medical devices (Lebanon, Tunisia) None	2 completed EOP target not realistic MTR target not defined
Output 2.1	Multi-disciplinary TDA team representing key stakeholders Thematic assessments (including gender) Meetings and capacity building workshops	Transboundary issues prioritized, and causal chain analysis performed Thematic assessments completed Final TDA document approved by the Project Steering Committee	MTR targets not defined Indicator/target not SMART
Output 2.2	Report on progress to impacts	None	No MTR target defined
Output 2.3	Offshore monitoring strategy outlining rational and methodology for selection of stations and providing guidance for IMAP compatible offshore monitoring Up to 5 pilots to support IMAP Implementation (selected indicators) at offshore monitoring stations	Guidance for IMAP compatible offshore monitoring prepared Countries assisted with IMAP implementation at selected offshore monitoring stations	Targets not SMART
Output 2.4	Assessment of national and regional databases Recommendations on the design of the IT model to connect national with regional network/ platforms	None None	No targets defined for indicators 1-2
Output 3.1	Number of knowledge products from CP 1.1 disseminated and used by stakeholders	National POPs and Hg inventories available on MapX Pilot project case studies disseminated	No match btw the indicator and targets

Rating for Quality & Revision of Design: Moderately Satisfactory

³ SMART indicators are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

A. Effectiveness

Theory of Change

95. Based on the assessment contained in Section III, the original Theory of Change of the project is rated **Moderately Unsatisfactory**.

Rating for Theory of Change: **Moderately Unsatisfactory**

Availability of Outputs

96. The information for assessment of effectiveness is sourced from annual Progress Implementation Reports and reports and presentations for the meetings of the Project Steering Committee. This information was subsequently verified with information collected through on-line interviews with selected projects stakeholders and in-person meetings during the evaluation missions to two beneficiary countries, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina and Tunisia. Additional sources of information were various technical reports and knowledge products produced by the project. The list of documents consulted is provided as Annex III to this report.

97. Tables 7 and 8 contain the summary of the actually delivered project results under the two substantive outcomes using the format of the project results framework. The last column in the tables summarises the achieved results in a bullet point format. The tabular summary is followed by a short narrative text with additional facts and details on how and why the results have or have not been achieved. By this token, the text following each table summarizes some important issues related to the delivery of project results that could not be captured in the tables but are important for the justification of the rating of the project outcomes. At the end, the narrative also explains the basis for rating of individual project outputs and outcomes.

Table 7: Summary of achievements for Outcome 1

Project objective/outcome	Objective/Outcome-level Indicators	Targets and Monitoring Milestones	Status
<u>Outcome 1.</u> Reduction of harmful chemicals and waste (POPs and mercury) in coastal hotspots and catchment areas	-No. of tonnes of POPs waste and new POPs eliminated - No. of tonnes of POPs prevented	<u>Mid-Term Target:</u> 586 t POPs removed <u>End of project Target</u> Disposal of 2,000 tonnes of POPs, including estimated 650 tonnes new POPs prevented	Two disposal contracts for total 722.95 tons of PCB waste signed (Algeria 451.95 t, Lebanon 271 t) HSE plans completed Work on Basel notification documents in progress Contract amendment for inclusion of Phase 2 quantities for Algeria in progress
	-No. of tonnes of Hg waste disposed of/safely stored - No. of tonnes of Hg prevented		Not applicable yet
<u>Output 1.1:</u> Management and disposal of 2,000 tonnes of POPs	Number of tenders awarded for POPs management/ disposal No. of national POPs inventories completed Number of Environment Management Plans approved for stockpiles and contaminated sites	<u>Mid-Term Target:</u> 1 tender awarded for disposal of Phase 1 stocks (from Algeria, Lebanon) 5 national Phase 2 inventories available EMP drafts in at least 3 countries <u>End Project Target:</u> 5 national EMPs approved Minimum 2 tenders awarded covering Total of 2,000 tonnes of POPs	• Two disposal contracts for total 722.95 tons of PCB waste signed (Algeria 451.95 t, Lebanon 271 t) • HSE plans completed, Basel notification documents under preparation • Proposed contract amendment for inclusion of additional 500 t from Phase 2 for Algeria in progress • National PCB phase 2 inventory completed in Algeria, Albania, on-going in Morocco and Tunisia • National inventories in BiH and Montenegro available through cooperation with parallel UNDP-implemented projects • Confirmed for phase 2: Albania (255 t), BiH (12 t), Montenegro (80 t) • Regional PCB Elimination Plan completed • EMP drafts for PCB-contaminated sites for Albania, BiH and Montenegro Not applicable yet

Project objective/outcome	Objective/Outcome-level Indicators	Targets and Monitoring Milestones	Status
<u>Output 1.2:</u> Management and safe storage of 50 tonnes of mercury wastes	Number of Environment Management Plans approved for stockpiles and contaminated sites	<u>Mid-Term Target:</u> 4 EMPs drafted for mercury waste removal <u>End Project Target:</u> Assessment and management plan for Tunisia site	• EMP for mercury waste management at Kasserine , Tunisia completed • Assessment of HAK-1 site contaminated with mercury in Tuzla completed • Draft EMP for mercury waste management at Tuzla, BiH • SSFAs for sites in Montenegro and Algeria awarded Not applicable yet
<u>Output 1.3:</u> New POPs reduction and alternatives pilot projects completed	No. of new POPS alternatives demonstrated through pilot projects No of trained staff applying new POPs approaches on regulation, procurement, and adoption of alternatives	<u>Mid-Term Target:</u> 3 new POPs inventories and databases completed <u>End Project Target:</u> At least 30 trained individuals actively support pilot projects Three case studies published	• Sampling for PFOS and HBCD inventories completed for Morocco, and Tunisia • Samples sent for analysis to CETI laboratory in Montenegro • National experts recruited for update of legislation with regard to management of new POPs in line with the Stockholm Convention in Tunisia Not applicable yet
<u>Output 1.4:</u> Mercury reduction through pilot activities on mercury alternatives	No of detailed national mercury stock-takes at hospitals and health centres No. of pilot project approaches developed to replace mercury in health care	<u>Mid-Term Target:</u> 2 national inventories of mercury medical devices (Lebanon Tunisia) <u>End Project Target:</u> 3 national inventories completed 3 national pilot projects completed	• 2 national inventories of mercury medical devices completed (Lebanon and Tunisia) • National legal experts recruited for update of national legislation on mercury in Tunisia and Morocco Not applicable yet

Output 1.1 Management and disposal of 2,000 tonnes of POPs (UNEP/MAP)

98. Output 1 has been implemented in two phases. Phase 1 addressed collection of 586 tonnes of PCB from 17 sites in Algeria and Lebanon, for which respective Environmental Management Plans (EMP) were completed and verified during the PPG phase of the project and were thus ready for disposal. This work was commenced almost immediately upon launching the project, but the procurement process was protracted due to complicated approval procedures at UNON. In April 2023 two contracts for disposal of PCB-contaminated equipment were signed for Algeria (451.95 tons) and Lebanon (271 tons).
99. Since then, an additional 500 tons of PCB equipment were identified and made ready for disposal. The additional quantity will be addressed through amendment of the contract for Algeria. At the time of the MTR, there was little progress on that as the contract is administered by UNON and is subject to approval by the UN Headquarters Committee on Contracts. Technical work under the two contracts has been in progress and includes development of Health, Safety and Environmental (HSE) plans and consultations for preparation of the notification documentation required under the Basel Convention for transboundary shipment of hazardous waste.
100. For identification of PCB stocks for Phase 2, UNEP/MAP signed SSFAs for Albania and Morocco, provided on-line trainings and procured PCB screening equipment for the national teams to conduct the inventories. The PCB inventory in Albania was conducted by the National Environmental Agency and in Morocco by the Ministry of Energy Transmission and Sustainable Development. For Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, the PCB inventories were conducted under the parallel projects implemented by UNDP.
101. Results of the national PCB inventories from Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro were compiled into the regional plan for PCB disposal that was finalised in May 2024. The plan also used a techno-economic analysis for validation of the most efficient options for PCB waste disposal based on the inventory results, the MedProgramme prioritization criteria, and costs of PCB waste elimination, and outlined scenarios for phase 2 PCB waste disposal.
102. For Phase 2 of PCB disposal, total 347 tons were confirmed including stocks in Montenegro (80 t), BiH (83 t), in Albania (255 t) and in Algeria (500 t) as the available PCB waste for disposal. The total confirmed amount of PCB waste for Phase1+2 disposal (as of June 2024) was thus 1,689 t, i.e. about 84% of the end-of-project target.
103. Based on the inventory done during the update of the National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention, Tunisia indicated availability of 490 tons of PCB waste but as of June 2024 this was not confirmed through provision of verified PCB data. National PCB inventory was included as one of outputs in the UN-to-UN agreement signed with UNDP Tunisia. However, at the time of the MTR, UNDP was still in the process of selection of consultants for the inventory.
104. As procurement of services for PCB disposal in Phase 1 through UNON faced long delays due to complicated approval processes, it was decided to engage with UNOPS for procurement of Phase 2 disposal of the PCB waste in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. The Phase 2 PCB waste in Algeria will be addressed through amendment of the existing contract for Phase 1.
105. As the originally planned site assessment of the Bijela shipyard in Montenegro had been addressed under a World Bank project on industrial waste management and clean-up, the Government of Montenegro proposed to conduct assessment of

contamination of the harbour beds with PCBs and mercury and related risks assessment for another location, namely the Tivat Bay and Risan Harbour. The assessment was conducted by the Centre for Ecotoxicological Researches of Montenegro (CETI) and completed in April 2024.

106. Environment Management Plans for stockpiles and contaminated sites were prepared under the UNDP-implemented projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.
107. The total identified PCB waste quantities stand at 2,166 t which exceeds the end-of-project target. However, based on the cost of the two signed Phase 1 disposal contracts, it is estimated that the total cost of disposal of the 2,166 t will be higher than the funds available in the project budget for Output 1.1.
108. However, the PRF is inconsistent with regard to the end-of-project targets for POPs disposal. The total target for Outcome 1 (and also as per the project GEBs) is "*Disposal of 2,000 tonnes of POPs, including estimated 650 metric tonnes of new POPs*", i.e. it was set as a combined target for Outputs 1.1 and 1.3. However, the single target listed under Output 1.1 is "*Minimum 2 tenders awarded covering total of 2,000 tonnes of POPs prevented*", while the target of 650 tonnes of new POPs is not set for Output 1.3.
109. Therefore, it will be necessary to remove the Output 1.1 target of 2,000 t of disposed PCB waste in order to address the above discrepancies and ensure internal consistency of the PRF.

Output 1.2: Management and safe storage of 50 tonnes of mercury wastes (UNEP/MAP)

110. At the project formulation phase, Bosnia and Herzegovina indicated presence of mercury waste at the decommissioned chlorine-alkaline industrial complex at Tuzla known as HAK. The complex comprises two industrial units HAK 1 and HAK 2 that served for production of chemicals required for polyurethane foam production, namely polyol (HAK1) and toluene diisocyanate (HAK2) with used of mercury electrodes for electrolysis,
111. The University of Tuzla conducted assessment of mercury pollution at HAK-1 that determined the concentrations and spatial distribution of mercury pollution in soil, water and the construction materials at the electrolysis plant. The highest mercury concentrations were found in the construction materials of the HAK-1 facility while concentrations in soil and water were found significantly lower. Overall, the study identified a considerable source of mercury pollution with a potential to spread to a wider area through surface and underground water runoff.
112. As a follow-up, the University of Tuzla was contracted to prepare an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for mercury waste disposal and remediation of the HAK-1 site. The draft EMP submitted in May 2024 proposes to use of *in-situ* approaches based on combination of immobilization, stabilization/solidification and possibly phytoremediation technologies the time of the MTR the draf. At t EMP was under review by a UNEP technical expert.
113. In Tunisia, the mercury assessment at Kasserine that had been planned for CP 1.1 was conducted and already completed under another GEF-funded project with UNIDO before the start of CP 1.1. Therefore, UNEP/MAP contracted the Spanish research centre CIEMAT for preparation of EMP for the Kasserine site. The contract with CIEMAT also included organisation of a meeting on mercury and three training workshops on assessment and remediation of sites polluted with mercury. The first meeting on mercury was organised in September 2023. The EMP for the Kasserine site was completed in June 2024. The current project will contract disposal of total 389 metric tonnes of mercury and associated wastes identified at the site. The training meeting at CIEMAT facilities planned for May 2024 had to be rescheduled for November 2024.

114. Two other activities on mercury in were included in the UN-to-UN transfer agreement with UNDP Tunisia, namely assessment of another polluted site at Oued Maaden and assessment of socio-economic impacts of ratification of the Minamata Convention. The latter study was completed in May 2024 and will be used to support the process of ratification of the Minamata Convention. It is envisaged that following the assessment of the Oued Maaden site, an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) will be prepared for containment and eventually removal. However, the removal could be financed from CP 1.1 only once Tunisia ratifies the Minamata Convention.

Output 1.3: New POPs reduction and alternatives pilot projects completed (MedWaves)

115. For this output, the Project Document envisages demonstration of environmentally sound alternatives to three new POPs highlighted in the National Implementation Plans of the project beneficiary countries, namely perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), hexabromocyclododecane (HBCD), and short-chain chlorinated paraffins (SCCPs). The proposed activities include promotion of fluorine- and solvent-free firefighting foams as replacement to PFOS, promotion of alternative flame retardants (such as butadiene-styrene brominated copolymer) as alternative to HBCD, and inventory of currently used SCCPs. The 2023 PSC agreed on prioritisation of pilot activities on PFOS and HBCD in three countries, namely Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, with the Lebanon pilot to include also SCCPs.
116. MedWaves as the implementing partner initiated the work on inventories in the identified priority sectors (civil defence, airports) and legal support for updating the legislation with mandatory provisions for restriction of import, export and use of PFOS/PFOA fire-fighting foams in line with the Stockholm Convention requirements. However, the progress slow due to several administrative challenges that included change of MedWaves officers in charge, delays in procurement of services of local laboratories and complexity of national regulatory frameworks in the target countries, as well as restrictive contractual frameworks and complicated administrative structures governing the operational processes in MedWaves. Furthermore, activities in Lebanon were put on hold due to difficult political situation in the country.
117. There was some progress after arrival of the new MedWaves Project Manager in September 2023. A proposal of a sampling plan for the inventory of new POPs was sent to the Morocco and Tunisia in November 2023. The plan was based on collection of samples from foam fire extinguisher reservoirs and from nearby sediments/groundwater was agreed with the two countries. The collection of samples was completed in June 2024 and all samples were sent to the CETI accredited laboratory for analysis. The results are expected by the end of 2024.
118. In June 2024, one national legal expert was recruited for update of legislation on management new POPs in Tunisia. This assignment will deliver a comprehensive legislative text on management of new POPs locally produced and imported, as well as monitoring in water and air. It has to include the entire cycle, from their importation as substances or raw materials, their use as finished products, to their disposal as waste.
119. The end-of-project target for Outcome 1 is prevention of estimated 650 tonnes of new POPs. The PSC meeting held in March 2024 encouraged the project countries to submit proposals for pilot projects on prevention of contamination with new POPs in their countries (including proposed outcomes in terms of tonnage of POPs to be prevented) for consideration at the extraordinary PSC meeting that is scheduled for September/October 2024. However, as the planned project completion date is 31 March 2025, the available time for implementation of the pilots will be about 6 months which is extremely tight and therefore unrealistic.

Output 1.4: Mercury reduction through pilot activities on mercury alternatives

120. Based on the approaches developed by WHO, national inventories on use of mercury-containing measuring devices in health sector facilities were completed in Lebanon and Tunisia. However, the inventories had a limited scope as only total 10 health sector facilities participated (4 in Lebanon and 6 in Tunisia). The total amount of mercury in use was estimated using a standard formula for mercury content in the various medical devices identified through the inventory. The total estimated amount of mercury was thus established at 17.3 kg only. Moreover, Tunisia informed that it had already banned use of medical devices containing mercury and therefore does not need further support from the project.
121. Legal experts were recruited for updating national legislation on use and management of mercury and mercury waste in line with the binding provisions of the Minamata Convention. The focus of this work is particularly on use of mercury in healthcare facilities (thermometers, sphygmomanometers, dental amalgams, amalgam separators, mercury lamps and tubes, etc.), as well as on proposal of new national standards and maximum permitted concentration of mercury in drinking water, wastewater, and consumer products.

Table 8: Summary of achievements for Component 2

Project objective/outcome	Objective/Outcom-level Indicators	Targets and Monitoring Milestones	Status
<u>Outcome 2.</u>			
<u>Output 2.1:</u> Updated TDA including gender assessment	Multi-disciplinary TDA tea representing key stakeholders Thematic assessments (including gender) Meetings and capacity building workshops	Transboundary issues prioritized, and causal chain analysis performed Thematic assessments completed Final TDA document approved by the Project Steering Committee	• 5 national TDA thematic assessments prepared (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Montenegro and Morocco) • Mediterranean Sea and Coasts TDA Report (regional synthesis document) compiled (version for publishing)
<u>Output 2.2:</u> Report on progress to impacts	Report on progress towards project's impacts and on the achievement of relevant SDGs	By the end of the Programme, report on progress to impacts is prepared	Not initiated
<u>Output 2.3:</u> Offshore monitoring strategy and identification of 20 locations for the offshore monitoring stations	Number of additional monitoring stations Offshore monitoring strategy outlining rational and methodology for selection of stations and providing guidance for IMAP compatible offshore monitoring Up to 5 pilots to support IMAP Implementation (selected indicators) at offshore monitoring stations	At least 20 offshore monitoring stations defined and guidance for IMAP compatible offshore monitoring prepared Countries assisted with IMAP implementation at selected offshore monitoring stations	• Stocktaking Report for preparation of offshore • Draft offshore monitoring strategy (Final (proposal) Report: Offshore Protocol – IMAP Monitoring Programme and Strategy) • List of Proposal for 20 offshore monitoring sites, • Proposal for a list of selected Common Indicators to be monitored at the offshore monitoring sites • Proposal for 5 pilot stations.
<u>Output 2.4:</u> Data sharing policy for the Mediterranean	Assessment of national and regional databases Recommendations on the design of the IT model to connect national with regional network/ platforms Proposal of a data sharing policy	Data sharing regional policy prepared as an input for the deliberation of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention	No information available

Output 2.1: Updated TDA including gender assessment

122. The work on the update of the 2005 TDA report was performed using a phased approach according to the GEF IW TDA/SAP Methodology Guidelines.⁴ Phase 1 (overall set up, definition of the TDA report structure, and engagement of stakeholders) was initiated in March 2021 with creation of the TDA Core Team and preparation of the TDA report roadmap. The latter included TDA objectives, milestones and workplan, setting of the internal UNEP/MAP coordination group, and development of the stakeholders' engagement strategy. The initial phase culminated at the 1st meeting of the TDA Steering Committee held on 4 November 2021 that approved the roadmap.
123. Phase 2 (development, analysis, and diagnostic) started in November 2021 until March 2023. This phase elaborated all necessary elements considered relevant for a successful delivery of the Mediterranean TDA Report to fulfil its objective towards the development of a Strategic Action Plan contributing to the management of the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) beyond 2025. It comprised technical as well as managerial activities, namely contributions of the regional expert and 'the UNEP/MAP Plan Bleu Regional Activity Center, mobilisation of national expert teams from 5 project countries, as well as organization of national stakeholders' workshops. Phase 2 concluded with preparation of the full TDA pre-publication document in March 2023.
124. Phase 3 (review) was initiated in April 2023 and received contributions from the Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties and from the CP1.1. project partners. Main findings and recommendations of the TDA report were presented to the meeting of MED POL Focal Points in May 2023. The Meeting requested the Contracting Parties to undertake a final review of the report before submission for publication.
125. Phase 4 (publication) included approval of the TDA report for publication by the UNEP Publication Board, it was stopped as a decision was taken to develop a shorter version of the report taking into consideration updated information from countries on the national TDA issues, and to integrate with the findings of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR)⁵.
126. The work on the TDA was further extended as the 2024 PSC meeting agreed to provide funding to the 9 project countries for development of the National Action Plan (NAP) and National Baseline Budget (NBB) reports in accordance with the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources (the LBS Protocol). The NAP reports will address the identified national transboundary priority issues that will be further considered in the TDA development process. A consultant will be hired to link the TDA assessment to the MED QSR and prepare a summary TDA report for policymakers in the Mediterranean countries.

Output 2.2: Report on progress to impacts

127. Implementation of this output was not initiated.

Output 2.3: Offshore monitoring strategy and identification of 20 locations for the offshore monitoring stations

128. Preparation of the offshore monitoring activities started with preparation of a stocktaking report that aimed at identification of the actual capabilities in offshore monitoring in the 9 project countries, in particular availability of infrastructures for

⁴ GEF IW:LEARN (2020). Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis/Strategic Action Programme Manual. TDA-SAP Methodology (<https://iwlearn.net/manuals/methodologies>)

⁵ The 2023 MED Quality Status Report was released in May 2024.

offshore monitoring, human and technical resources, as well as inventory of past and current marine and offshore monitoring activities.

129. The stocktaking report completed in August 2022 indicates that all the nine countries have the legal frameworks that enable the countries to conduct the required monitoring and assessment programmes. At the same time, the report highlighted some distinctions between the countries in terms of completeness of facilities for offshore monitoring and acknowledged that few countries lack some essential facilities such as laboratories and operational seagoing infrastructures.
130. A draft proposal for an offshore monitoring strategy as part of under the existing Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) was prepared in December 2022. Based on a review of the national IMAP reports and the monitoring sampling locations for each country, the draft strategy proposed 20 offshore monitoring sites, a list of selected common indicators for monitoring at the offshore monitoring sites, as well as selection of 5 pilot stations for long-term monitoring observations distributed to cover the main geographic features of the Mediterranean Sea.
131. The draft offshore monitoring strategy was further reviewed with the aim to align it with the IMAP Work Plans, IMAP Guidance Fact Sheets and IMAP Monitoring Guidelines, assess linkages of pollution in sensitive areas of the Mediterranean to the IMAP, and develop a concrete proposal for presentation to the countries.

Output 2.4: Data sharing policy for the Mediterranean

132. At their 22nd meeting in December 2021, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention took a decision to adopt the UNEP/MAP Data Policy.⁶ As such, this policy covers data owned by UNEP/MAP as well as data owned by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols or data produced by third parties that are of interest to environmental policies in the Mediterranean. It concerns the environmental data and information collected, acquired, processed and disseminated through the InfoMAP Platform.
133. In line with the adopted Policy, data providers are expected to follow the principle that all data and products, financed with public means should be fully available for use by public bodies, and that these data should be made available for others to use with as few restrictions as possible. The Policy was designed to explore and use technological shifts in information and communication technologies for data collection, processing and use in innovative ways.
134. In summary over the two substantive components, the project has made decent progress on the two outputs addressing disposal of POPs and mercury waste. However, progress on the two outputs addressing prevention of waste has been only marginal, in particular on Output 1.4 dealing with prevention of mercury waste. The decision of the 2024 PSC meeting that invites submission of pilot projects on prevention of new POPs can bring implementation of Output back on track, Output 1.4 for prevention of mercury waste does not show any prospect of achievement of the as one of the target countries is no longer interested in continuation of the activities.

Output 3.1: Knowledge Management strategy shares knowledge from Child Project 1.1

135. Component 3 cuts across the two substantive components of the project and its delivery is coordinated with the Child Project 4.1. Under this output, the two projects prepared and shared posts on social media, and produced several knowledge management products, such as case studies, technical materials, reports from

⁶ Decision IG.25/10 on MAP Data Policy

trainings and field visits, as well as contributions to the MedBulletin, BRS COP and various awareness-raising events. Specifically, this included interactive visualisation of the results of the PCB inventory and mercury assessment from BiH on MapX.

136. In October 2023, MedProgramme initiated development of a Knowledge Management (KM) platform with the Global Resource Information Database - Geneva (GRID-Geneva). The KM products from CP 1.1 will be uploaded to the platform once it is operational (expected in fall 2024). More details on the development of the platform are in sub-section Communication and Public Awareness.

Output 3.2: Regular monitoring and evaluation of project progress and results

137. Regular monitoring of the project was conducted in line with the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan that is contained in the Project Document (section C). Detailed results of the monitoring are documented in the annual Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) for the GEF fiscal years 2021, 2022 and 2023. The PIRs were produced in the required format and adequate level of details with due reference to the PRF. Monitoring results were also summarised in the PSC meeting minutes and reports from the MedProgramme Annual Stocktaking Meetings.
138. The Midterm Review (MTR) was initiated after the 2023 PSC meeting. According to the Project Document, the MTR was to be conducted in the 3rd year of the project. The original target was to complete the MTR by September 2023. However, the process was delayed and the MTR consultant was contracted as of 1 March 2024 with the expected completion date of mid-August 2024

Availability of outputs is rated **Moderately Satisfactory**.

Progress Towards Project Outcomes

139. Component 1 of the project foresees only one expected outcome, namely *Reduction of harmful chemicals and waste (POPs and mercury) in coastal hotspots and catchment areas*.
140. In consideration of the actual status of delivery of the planned outputs, this Outcome appears to be difficult to achieve. The mid-term target of removal of 586 t of POPs has not been achieved. Although the total quantities of PCBs contracted for Phase 1 removal exceeds the mid-term target, the PCB waste has not been removed yet due to initial slow progress in contracting the removal services and time-consuming procedures for obtaining all documentation required for physical removal of the waste stocks in line with the provisions of the Basel Convention.
141. Outcome 2 of the project is defined in terms of enabling the littoral countries of the Mediterranean to identify trends and progress to impacts based on updating the previous TDA, establishing offshore monitoring stations and development of a policy for data sharing.
142. While there has been visible progress towards development of three out of four outputs (Outputs 2.1, 2.3 and 2.4) under this component, these are general outputs not directly linked to identification of impacts of the specific land-based pollution reduction addressed under Component 1. However, achievement of Outcome 2 is dependent on delivery of the Output 2.2 that is based on analysis and compilation of information generated under Component 1 and through knowledge management activities of the CP 4.1, that, together with the updated TDA, should identify key areas of the project impacts substantiate findings with quantitative and qualitative data. Work on delivery of the Output 2.2 has not started yet.

Based on the above, progress towards project outcomes is rated **Moderately Unsatisfactory**.

Likelihood of Impact

143. CP 1.1 was designed to combine the waste reduction component with the pollution monitoring component to see impacts of the pollution reduction. While Outcome 1 is designed at a concrete level for reduced pollution by POPs and mercury at selected pollution hotspots, Outcome 2 is defined at a rather general level for systemic and transformational change at the longer-term horizon through establishment of offshore monitoring network and exchange of pollution monitoring data.
144. The offshore monitoring strategy developed under Output 2.3 proposes 20 Common Indicators for monitoring concentration and effects of various types of pollution. However, there are only two Common Indicators related to pollution by PCBs and mercury that is addressed under the project while the new POPs are not included among the key harmful contaminants under the offshore monitoring strategy.
145. Common Indicator 17 (CI-17) is proposed to monitor concentrations of key harmful contaminants in relevant matrices (biota, sediment, seawater) and includes total mercury as well as organochlorinated compounds, including PCBs. Common Indicator 18 (CI-18) is proposed to determine effects of the pollution by the key harmful pollutants by monitoring biological effects.
146. While the implementation of CI-17 will be based on the existing monitoring system of UNEP/ MAP MED POL monitoring programme, the biological effects monitoring for CI-18 is generally less widely established in both national and international pollution monitoring programmes. However, there is no spatial and time relation between the reduced pollution by POPs and mercury in the pollution hotspots and the results of the assessments using CI-17.
147. Therefore, it will not be possible to identify the immediate impacts of pollution reduction achieved under Component 1 with results from the offshore monitoring network.

Likelihood of impact is rated **Moderately Unsatisfactory**.

Adaptive Management

148. Measures of adaptive management were taken by the PCU in response to various implementation challenges resulting from delays due to complex administrative processes on the side of UNON. On the side of the project countries, the implementation challenges resulted from changed preferences, impact of political changes on negotiations of the SSFAs, as well as limited capacity and weak coordination at the national level in certain countries. Specific implementation challenges also occurred as a result of slow progress towards ratification of the Minamata Convention in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Tunisia.
149. As a response to slow progress in procurement of Phase 1 PCB disposal services for Algeria and Lebanon, UNEP/MAP engaged with UNOPS for procurement of Phase 2 disposal services of the PCB stocks in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, as well as mercury and PCB in Tunisia. The engagement with UNOPS has been further supported by recruitment of national consultants for coordination with governmental agencies and follow-up/reporting on disposal in the above countries.
150. Due to delays in implementation of the project activities in Tunisia, a decision was taken to conclude UN to UN Transfer Agreement between UNEP and UNDP to coordinate execution of national activities on a national PCB inventory, conduct of socio- economic assessment of impact of Minamata Convention ratification, national report on TDA, as well as assessment of mercury contamination at Oued Maaden site and development of an Environmental Management Plan for the site.

Based on the above, Adaptive Management is rated **Satisfactory**.

Rating for Effectiveness: Moderately Satisfactory

B. Financial Management

Adherence to UNEP's/Donor Financial Policies and Procedures

151. The financial monitoring of project delivery includes quarterly financial reports to the Implementing Agency as well as annual reports to GEF. Based on that, the MTR consultant believes that the project has been implemented in line with the GEF and UNEP financial policies and procedures. However, full assessment of the adherence with the GEFP/UNEP financial policies and procedures is beyond the scope of the MTR as such assessment should be based on a financial audit.

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's/Donor Financial Policies and Procedures: N.A.

Completeness of Financial Information

152. Financial information was provided in the form of quarterly expenditure reports for the 4th quarters of calendar years 2021-2023 and for the 1st quarter of 2024. Apart from information about expenditures in the 4th quarter, these reports contain cumulative expenditures for previous quarters of given calendar year and therefore contain total annual expenditures. These reports were not readily available from the project team as part of the project information package and were provided upon request of the Evaluator.

153. The expenditures in the quarterly expenditure reports are broken down by individual budget lines (personnel, travel, sub-contracts) and contain subtotals for the two substantive components of the project. This data enabled comparison of estimated (budgeted) and actual project expenditures by component/outcome as listed in Table 9 and projection expenditures by calendar years as shown in Table 10.

Table 9: Expenditures by substantive outcomes

Component/sub-component/output (All figures as USD)	Budget at design	Actual expenditure (as of 31 March 2024)	Expenditure ratio (actual/budget)
Component 1 / Outcome 1	11,122,000.00	3,309,237.28	29.75%
Component 2 / Outcome 2	2,908,000.00	2,674,106.57	91.96%
Total for substantive outcomes	14,030,000.00	5,983,343.85	42.65%

Table 10: Expenditures by calendar years

Component	2021*	2022	2023	2024**	All years
Outcome 1	115,823.20	475,251.74	1,276,610.44	1,441,551.90	3,309,237.28
% of total for Outcome 1	3.50%	14.36%	38.58%	43.56%	100.00%
Outcome 2	251,276.15	493,370.57	939,155.76	990,304.08	2,674,106.57
% of total for Outcome 2	9.40%	18.45%	35.12%	37.03%	100.00%

* Data for 2021 is cumulative from the start of the project until 4th Q 2021

** Data for 1st Q 2024

154. It follows from Table 99 that as of 31 March 2024, the total project delivery under Outcome 1 reached only 30% while delivery under Outcome 2 exceeded 90%. The

historical data in Table 10 shows very slow delivery at the start of the project when annual expenditures for Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 reached only 3.5% and 9.4 %, respectively. This was mainly due to the effect of Covid-19 pandemic at the start of the project implementation. The still low expenditures in 2022 show the effect of slow procurement, particularly for Phase 1 PCB disposal services under Component 1.

155. The total budget for Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) and the Project Management Costs (PMC) is 3% and 4.8%, respectively, which is in line with GEF/UNEP policies and is considered adequate and reasonable for a project of this complexity. However, the expenditure reports provided to the Evaluator do not contain subtotals for M&E and PMC and therefore do not allow further analysis of the budget to actual comparison for PMC.
156. There is no information on co-financing commitments for the project at the CEO Endorsement. As the project team does not track co-financing by the project partners and stakeholders, no information on actually realised co-financing at MTR was available for this report.
157. According to the workplan for the remaining period of the project that was presented at the 2024 PSC meeting, the project will not be able to fully use the available funding by the completion date of the project (March 2025). The budget forecast that was also presented to the 2024 PSC suggests that the unspent balance at the end of March 2025 could be about 3 million USD, mainly from funds allocated for Outputs 1.3 and 1.4. Therefore, the project would benefit from extension by 12 months.

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: **Moderately Unsatisfactory**

Table 11: Financial Management Table

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures:		n/a	
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	
2. Completeness of project financial information⁷:			
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)		MS	
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes/No	No co-financing at design information
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	As part of PSC meetings
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	List of SSFAs provided
D.	Proof of fund transfers	n/a	
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	No	
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Yes Not	For substantive components For M&E and PMC
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (<i>where applicable</i>)	n/a	
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	n/a	
3. Communication between finance and project management staff		n/a	
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		n/a	
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		n/a	
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.		n/a	
Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.		n/a	
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process		n/a	
Overall rating		MS	

Rating for Financial Management: Moderately Satisfactory

C. Efficiency

158. The project was approved for implementation in January 2020. The official start date of the project is considered April 2020 which is the date of the first disbursement. The Project Inception Report is part of the overall Inception Report for the MedProgramme and its 7 Child Projects, dated September 2020 and was published following review of the draft report at the Project Inception Workshop conducted in July 2020.
159. The start of the project was affected by the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 and related travel and social distancing restrictions. After the initial slow progress,

⁷ See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

the project execution accelerated in 2022 and 2023 when the MedPCU was fully staffed including short time gender and knowledge management experts.

160. Other reported issues affecting project implementation are related to delays in procurement. The protracted and complicated procurement of the PCB Phase 1 disposal contracts through UNON led to engagement with UNOPs for procurement of Phase 2 contracts on expectation of accelerated procurement processes. The procurement arrangement with UNOPS includes recruitment of a consultant to follow-up on disposal of PCB in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Tunisia, as well as mercury in Tunisia.
161. In early 2024, the MedPCU experienced shortfall of staff caused by resignation of the technical Programme Management Officer and Finance/Budget Officer that was exaggerated by slow progress with recruitment for the vacant posts. At the time of the MTR, the two posts were still officially vacant although the recruitment processes were reportedly near completion.
162. The project has successfully enabled collaboration among a large set of stakeholders, including high ranking national authorities and educational/research institutions. It has also taken advantage of complementarities with parallel projects implemented by sister UN agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Tunisia and achieved thus synergies and faster progress towards the planned results while making savings on the CP 1.1 financial resources.
163. However, the executing partners expressed uncertainty whether all activities for delivery of planned results could be completed within the remaining time period of the project. Therefore, extension of the project will be proposed under recommendations.

Rating for Efficiency: Moderately Satisfactory

D. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring of Project Implementation

164. The Project Document contains a detailed Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. The monitoring part of the Plan comprises the Inception Workshop, Annual Stocktaking Meetings (ASM), and PSC meetings. The main monitoring tool for CP 1.1 were the PSC meetings organised annually specifically by the project itself while the Inception Workshop and ASMs were organised in the context of the entire MedProgramme.
165. The project monitoring has been conducted in line with the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and documented in the PSC meeting minutes and reports from the ASMs.

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Satisfactory

Project Reporting

166. Project reporting consisted of compilation of quarterly progress and financial reports and annual PIRs prepared according to the UNEP and GEF reporting requirements. Progress reports were also prepared specifically for the annual meetings of the PSC.
167. The MTRR found the available project reports sufficiently detailed and the reporting formats in compliance with the UNEP and GEF reporting standards. The MTRR observation is that, in general, the project reporting ensured transparent information flow across the executing partners and the project key stakeholders.
168. However, access of the MTR consultant to various project-related documents, such as workplans, budget revisions, terms of references, contracts and their deliverables, as well as the periodic documents like PIRs and financial plans, was possible only on basis

of ad-hoc requests to the MedPMU as there was no repository of the relevant project documentation required for the MTR.

Rating for Project Reporting: Satisfactory

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Satisfactory

E. Exit Strategy & Sustainability

Exit Strategy

169. Development of an exit strategy was not planned in the Project Document hence no activity was conducted in this regard.

Rating for Exit Strategy: N.A.

Socio-political Sustainability

170. Project has been successful in building up ownership, interest and commitment of Government institutions and stakeholders despite political challenges in few project countries and related difficulties in planning and execution of specific activities in those countries. However, the very slow progress towards ratification of the Minamata Convention hampers implementation of specific activities on mercury waste disposal and prevention.

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Financial Sustainability

171. The CP 1.1 was designed to attract considerable amounts of co-financing. However, the co-financing contributions were only modest in the first three years of the project. Increased mobilisation of co-financing from Governments and private sector will be required particularly for Component 1 on disposal of PCB and mercury waste.

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Institutional Sustainability

172. There is a well-established regional network as the project contributes to the programme of work adopted by the Conference of Parties of the Barcelona Convention. There is variable level of institutional stability at the level of the project countries with currently visibly higher institutional stability in the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean. The on-going project activities contribute to strengthening of national institutional frameworks through cooperation between the project countries.

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Likely

Rating for Sustainability: Moderately Likely

F. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Project Inception

173. According to the implementation practice of GEF-funded projects, the Inception Meeting for the entire MedProgramme was held on 20-22 July 2020. Due to Covid-19 travel restrictions it was held in a videoconference modality. The meeting was attended by representatives of the participating countries as the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, representatives of UNEP as the GEF Implementing Agency,

representatives of the Executing Partners, as well as representatives of the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit, including the MedProgramme Coordination Team.

174. The Inception Meeting (IM) was organised with a set of objectives, namely:
- Launch the Programme;
 - Provide an update on the plans to execute the activities of each CP;
 - Review and provide feedback on complementarities and interactions among the CPs
 - Submit for consideration of the Contracting Parties the work plans and budgets for the first year of execution.
175. The Inception Report (IR) from the meeting was published in September 2020⁸ and reflects the discussion on the MedProgramme and its seven Child Projects Inception Meeting. Annex A to the IR can be considered as a revision of the Project Document for CP 1.1. In comparison with the original Project Document, the revision contains a structured and numbered list of activities for Component 2 with more detailed description of each activity.
176. The UNEP/MAP and EPs agreed to start the execution after the conclusions of the IM of the MedProgramme and to continuously assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. They also agreed to establish a Steering Committee to be held by spring 2021 where updated implementation plans and budgets would be presented. In addition to the revision of activities under Component 2, the IM also considered several adjustments of the activities under Component 1 described in further paragraphs below.
177. With regard to Output 1.1, the IM participants requested UNEP/MAP and EPs to reconsider the phased approach for including additional countries at the onset of the project (in addition to Algeria and Lebanon). However, UNEP/MAP explained that the above two countries considered for phase 1 have already completed the inventory of equipment with PCB, and site-specific environmental management plan for immediate disposal at the project preparation phase. Hence it was agreed to pursue the same task in other interested countries in preparation for disposal of PCBs in Phase 2 of the project.
178. Participants of the Inception Meeting requested UNEP, UNEP/MAP and EPs to further explore the mandatory conditions under the Minamata Convention with regard to eligibility for the GEF funds. They also encouraged the interested countries, namely Albania, Algeria and Bosnia and Herzegovina, to engage in discussion with the GEF Secretariat considering that these countries are not party to the Minamata Convention but took legally binding measures to reduce the mercury contamination in line with the Article 15 of the LBS Protocol of the Barcelona Convention. As the latter advocates stricter conditions than the Minamata Convention, this was considered to support eligibility of the above countries for realization of CP 1.1 activities related to decontamination of mercury hot spots identified in the Project Document.
179. With regards to Output 1.4 on mercury reduction, the IM participants considered information on a review of on-going or planned audits under the Minamata Convention Initial Assessments to be undertaken by MedWaves/SCP RAC in the targeted countries in order to avoid overlapping with the specific inventory of mercury-containing devices in public hospitals planned under CP 1.1.

⁸ UNEP/MED WG.481/4

180. Regarding Outputs 1.3 and 1.4 on reduction of new POPs and mercury, the IM participants requested to undertake a cost-benefit analysis for the substitution of new POPs by other alternatives, as expensive alternatives might be difficult to implement.
181. There was discussion about selection of national experts and it was agreed that the countries have the full right to select their own consultants and to inform UNEP/MAP on the selection. However, selection with regards to Outputs 1.3 and 1.4 related to the reduction of new POPs and mercury would be made directly by MedWaves-SCP/RAC according to its procurement rules and procedures, in full consultation of the Ministries of Environment of the participating countries.
182. The MTR considers organisation of the IM timely and in line with the aims and expectations. Therefore, the MTR rating for preparation and readiness is '**Satisfactory**'.

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

183. UNEP/MAP is the Executing Agency of this project with activities being led jointly by the MED POL and the MedProgramme Coordinating Unit (MedPCU). The latter was created in 2020 in line with the provisions in the Project Document and is hosted and supervised by UNEP/MAP. The MedPCU ensures coordination across the entire MedProgramme and provides management functions to the Child Projects executed by UNEP/MAP.
184. Since the beginning of the project implementation, the MedPCU was staffed in two technical posts, namely two Programme Management Officers, and two support posts, namely the Administration Assistant, and Financial Assistant. However, there has been high staff turnover in the positions. In 2022, the new Programme Management Officer for the technical part was recruited but remained in post only until February 2024. In 2023, the MED POL and MedPCU Programme Management Officers swapped their positions. At the time of preparation of this report, the MedPCU had just the single Programme Management Officer (PMO) and two assistants while the respective posts of the technical PMO and Associate Finance and Budget Officer were under recruitment.
185. Two UNEP/MAP's regional activity centers are co-executing partners. The MedWaves, previously known as the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) is responsible for execution of Outputs 1.3 and 1.4. The respective roles of MedPCU and MedWaves are distinctive with very little opportunities for direct collaboration. The Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre is designated for co-execution of Component 2. Until the MTR, there was no information available about direct involvement of Plan Bleu in the project.
186. There was also staff turnover at the MedWaves. The Project Manager for the Policy Area resigned from the post in June 2023 and the successor was appointed as of September 2023.
187. There have been periodic on-line meetings between Med/PCU and MedWaves organised to exchange information about the progress made in the execution of the distinct activities, discuss implementation challenges, and coordinate preparation of working and information documents for the PSC and other events of the project.
188. There have been almost no constraints regarding cooperation with the designated National Focal Points for the project as political situation in almost all partner countries has been stable since the start of the project implementation. The only exception is Lebanon that was very active in the initial phase of the project but more recently the communication broke down and the in-country project activities were put on hold as a result of in-country political challenges.

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: Moderately Satisfactory

Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

189. Participation of stakeholders in the project preparatory phase is well documented in Annex P to the CEO that contains proceedings from the two regional consultations where the representatives of the project countries had opportunity to discuss pertinent issues of the project formulation. Further opportunity was given through virtual consultations immediately after the 2nd regional consultation meeting.
190. Stakeholder participation in the first year of the project implementation comprised mainly establishment of the Project Steering Committee with overall project oversight and advisory functions. The Committee was established in late 2020 and consists of representatives of the project beneficiary countries at a technical decision-making level (e.g. GEF Operational Focal Points or national focal points for Stockholm, Minamata or Barcelona conventions), the UNEP Task Managers for CW and IW focal areas, the MedProgramme Coordinator, and representatives of the executing agencies. The MedPCU acts as Secretariat for the PSC.
191. Eight of the GEF Operational Focal Points of the participating countries took part in the first Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting in March 2021 that reviewed preliminary progress and approved the 2021-2022 workplan and budget. The committee has met on three occasions at 12-month intervals, namely in March 2022, 2023 and 2024. There is an extraordinary PSC meeting scheduled for September 2024 as a project mid-term stocktaking meeting for consideration of results of the MTR.
192. Further stakeholder participation was based on implementation of the stakeholder engagement plan contained in Section A.3 of the approved Project Document and consisted of coordination of project activities with and among the countries to ensure that pertinent activities were implemented. The priority was given to exchanges with stakeholders in Algeria and Lebanon as the Phase 1 countries with the aim to encourage collection of data needed for preparation of the PCB disposal and ensure readiness of the two countries (including private sector owners of PCB waste) for execution of the disposal contracts once the procurement of PCB disposal services is completed.
193. Under Component 1, stakeholders from the level of national governments and from the national technical teams participated in the Annual Stocktaking Meeting and in PCB trainings. The collaboration of national stakeholders in Bosnia and Herzegovina, good collaboration between the government, UNDP and Tuzla University led to successful completion of the mercury assessment at HAK-1 complex in Tuzla. For Tunisia, extensive consultation between the EA, UNDP Tunisia and the Government led to the development of a UN-to-UN transfer agreement for accelerated implementation of the planned national activities in Tunisia. MedWaves engaged with national stakeholders from Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco on respective inventories of mercury-containing medical devices and PFOs-containing extinguishers.
194. In Component 2, the main avenue for stakeholder participation was the establishment of the Steering Committee for the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis. Further participation included engagement of relevant institutions in five project countries for preparation of national TDA reports, and engagement for preparation of a stocktaking report on technical and scientific capabilities for offshore monitoring. However, there was no attempt for systematic involvement of the Mediterranean EU member countries. Participation of those countries would increase the value of the regional TDA and establish grounds for expansion of the offshore monitoring network.
195. Following the model of the PPG Regional Consultation Meetings, the PSC meetings were supposed to bring together both Chemicals and Waste and International Water stakeholders. However, this was the case only for few countries while others were

represented only by Chemicals and Waste stakeholders. Weak representation of the IW stakeholders did not contribute to transparency and collaboration of stakeholders across the two Focal Areas. This point was also raised at the 2024 ASM that recommended to increase the connectivity between C&W / IW not only for CP 1.1 but also for the other relevant child projects.

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Moderately Satisfactory

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

196. Human rights-based approach and inclusion of marginalised communities were not explicitly addressed in the project design. Nevertheless, a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation. Since the project directly tackles environmental degradation in priority land-based and coastal pollution hot spots of the Mediterranean, it implicitly addresses human rights implications of environmental damage as these are felt most severely by disadvantaged groups in the society, including rural communities and the urban poor, women, children, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities.
197. The MedProgramme has developed a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (contained as Annex I of the CP 1.1 Project Document) with the aim to meet gender equality objectives and bring cohesive gender-responsive actions throughout its diverse portfolio. The Strategy envisages development of gender action plans under the Child Projects to address objective-specific gender and socioeconomic dimension, and pioneer a pan-Mediterranean effort towards greater gender equality and environmental security.
198. In this context, a specific Gender Action Plan for Component 1 was developed during the CP 1.1 formulation phase. In addition to engagement of a gender consultant for design of gender-focused surveys and training sessions, the Plan also calls for regulatory frameworks, disposal plans and pollution prevention policies to have gender-responsive focus and inclusive approach.
199. To support the above, the MedProgramme Gender Community of Practice (Gender CoP) was established in June 2021 as a forum for executing partners and national counterparts to enhance knowledge on gender equality and women's empowerment in sustainable environment development within the context of MedProgramme activities.
200. The Gender CoP meeting held in October 2022 focused on gender issues in chemicals and waste and presented extensive information on importance of this topic (POPs and mercury particularly), given women and men's different exposure to harmful chemicals and associated impacts, due to biological differences, social gender roles and gender-specific division of labour in occupational roles. An update on the implementation of gender activities in the context of CP 1.1 was provided, mainly on gender capacity-building activities at the national level and knowledge exchange with relevant international actors.
201. The capacity of project implementation staff for mainstreaming gender in project activities in the context of chemicals and waste was enhanced through participation in the 3rd Gender CoP meeting. An in-depth presentation was prepared for that meeting, building on the presentation/training delivered previously during the training held in Algeria on in June 2022. This constitutes one of concrete gender actions for the chemicals and waste component under CP 1.1. Further activities included presentation on gender aspects in occupational health and safety for handling PCBs in Lebanon in November 2022, on-line presentation on "Gender Issues in Chemicals & Waste" held in Tunisia in June 2023, as well as outlines of case studies with gender aspects of occupational exposure to mercury in hospitals in Tunisia and Lebanon.

202. As a matter of fact, there are no links of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) for Component 1 to the PRF and there are no gender mainstreaming indicators in the PRF. Although the Gender CoP meeting made recommendations for implementation of the GAP, this issue was not addressed at the 2023 and 2024 PSC meetings for CP 1.1. Consequently, no gender disaggregated statistics were collected for the various activities under Component 1.
203. Through the agreement with UNOPs, the MedPCU recruited a gender specialist for effective implementation of the MedProgramme Gender Strategy endorsed for all eight Child Projects. As of July 2024, the recruitment was still on-going. The consultant is expected to support execution of the Gender Strategy and ensure coherence of gender-responsive actions throughout the portfolio of child projects. However, the ToR for the assignment does not contain any reference to the GAP of Component 1 of CP 1.1.
204. Component 2 of the CP 1.1 envisages a dedicated gender assessment in the course of TDA update that will help to establish a baseline, showing the differences in gender norms, roles, power structures, activities, needs, opportunities, and rights, which affect men, women, in the context of changing environmental and socio-economic situation in the Mediterranean. This envisages collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and gender information to understand gender differences and gaps, and determine gender differentiated impacts and risks. Also, an action plan will be produced to identify measures to avoid adverse gender impacts, and to act on opportunities to address gender gaps and inequalities.
205. As part of the TDA update, a gender/socio-economic assessment was developed focusing on how gender relates to transboundary water issues, pollution of marine ecosystems, identifying also future scenarios and gender-specific risks in the use of chemicals. A gender presentation providing an overview of Chapter 5 of the TDA on gender was developed and delivered during the 2nd meeting of the TDA Steering Committee in December 2022.
206. This exercise will be the first-ever TDA for the Mediterranean region to include a gender thematic assessment based on collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and assessment of gender indicators.

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: Satisfactory

Environmental and Social Safeguards

207. At the formulation phase, the CP 1.1 was subject to UNEP Environmental, Social and Economic Screening conducted using a standardised procedure for assessment and rating of probability, impact and significance of risks related to nine thematic safeguards that UNEP considers important for implementation of its projects.
208. The result of the screening is summarised in the Environmental, Social and Economic Review Note provided as Annex I to the Project Document. The screening identified moderate risks related to the possibility of an accident or spill during the repackaging, transport and environmentally sound destruction of PCB and mercury wastes addressed by the project.
209. The identified risks will be managed through preparation of an initial Environmental Management Plan (EMP) prepared by qualified consultants for each site where waste related operations will be conducted, and a Environment, Health and Safety (EHS) document prepared by waste disposal contractors detailing the precautionary and emergency measures to be in place before operations begin, including ongoing monitoring of worker exposure, air quality, and other relevant measures depending on the type of wastes being handled.

210. The project design includes a Phase 1 of disposal activities in two countries (Algeria and Lebanon), for which the site-specific EMPs have been included as Annex J to the request for GEF CEO Endorsement.
211. For Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, draft EMPs are available as Annex for a PCB disposal procurement request. The EHS documents will be developed by the selected bidders to include assessment of risks which are regularly monitored by the national authorities and Executing Agency during the supervision of implementation of the PCB disposal contracts.
212. The initial Environmental, Social and Economic Screening was conducted and documented in line with the standard procedure and implementation of the project follows conclusions from this process.

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Satisfactory

Country Ownership and Drivenness

213. The entire MedProgramme and its Child Projects were developed in a participatory manner through consultation with the project countries. However, there is no documentation available about involvement of the countries in the initial phase of the MedProgramme concept development. Available documentation suggests that the Programme Framework Document (PFD) for the MedProgramme was developed between April and October 2016 through technical consultations between involved GEF Implementing Agencies and execution partners.
214. These consultations culminated at the kick-off meeting in May 2017 that gathered 12 partner institutions for consultation about preparation of 7 Child Projects of the MedProgramme. The GEF Implementing Agencies and execution partners defined contributions of each actor to the overall MedProgramme outcome, discussed their integration creation of synergies, determined specific components of the proposed Child Projects, and set a timeline for preparation of the fully-fledged project documents.
215. Specifically with regard to the CP 1.1, a regional workshop on Improved and Harmonized POPs Inventories and Action Plan was organized by the Stockholm Convention Regional Centre for North Africa in Morocco on 30 October – 3 November 2017. The workshop was followed by technical missions to Algeria, Lebanon and Tunisia to identify potential interventions and sites for PCBs and mercury disposal and site remediation in the period December 2017 – February 2018.
216. The first regional consultation for the MedProgramme in March 2018 was attended by the GEF Operational Focal Points from eight project countries, namely Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco and Tunisia. The country representatives took note of the progress achieved on the preparation of all Child Projects and validated the proposed activities, the sites chosen for their execution at the national level and the provisional timeline for submission of the CPs to the GEF Secretariat.
217. The second regional consultation for the MedProgramme in September 2018 was organised with participation of the GEF OFPs (or their representatives) from Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro and Tunisia. The country representatives confirmed the importance of the MedProgramme for their countries and for the region, and endorsed the proposals of UNEP/MAP on (i) the timeline for finalization of the Child Projects of the MedProgramme and their submission to the GEF Secretariat for endorsement; (ii) the development of the overarching strategies for Knowledge Management and Gender Mainstreaming; and (iii) the arrangements for execution of the MedProgramme through the MedProgramme Coordinating Unit (MedPCU).

218. For the regional consultation meetings, the country representatives coordinated gathering of comments from their respective competent national institutions and thematic experts and provided UNEP/MAP with a set of official comments on matters pertinent for development of the MedProgramme and its CPs. Also, they agreed to take the necessary steps to ensure effective coordination with their respective national counterparts in the programme (e.g. interministerial bodies, stakeholder groups, etc).
219. According to the minutes of the two regional consultations, the bulk of the contributions from the countries to discussion on the CP 1.1 was related to Component 1 on management of POPs and mercury waste while discussion on Component 2 was almost non-existent.
220. Ownership of the project was further maintained during the first years of implementation by active participation of the countries in the PSC, , coordination with relevant national bodies and institutions, as well as direct involvement of national experts in execution of project activities. Again, the minutes of the PSC meetings show that emphasis in the discussion was put on Component 1 with focus on national pollution hot spots and less attention was paid to Component 2 with focus on regional cooperation in TDA and offshore monitoring. Although the 2024 ASM recommended MedProgramme-wide national events for bringing national stakeholders from all child projects together to exchange information and build on the programme aspects, there is no evidence of such events so far.
221. The rating on country ownership and drivenness for the CP 1.1 is Moderately Satisfactory reflecting that the development of the MedProgramme PDF and initial discussion about the CP 1.1 appear to have been driven by the GEF IAs and co-executing partners, while further development of the CP 1.1 was done with full and active participation of the participating countries.

Rating for Country Ownership and Drivenness: Moderately Satisfactory

Communication and Public Awareness

222. In the framework of the PPG phase of the MedProgramme, the Knowledge Management Strategy was prepared in the period June - September 2018 in close coordination with the UNEP/MAP Secretariat. The Strategy is based on analysis of the MedProgramme PFD and other various background documentation, including the Report from the First Regional Consultation, in-depth review of available drafts of Child Project documents, results of a dedicated online survey, etc.
223. The KM Strategy is presented as Annex H to the MedProgramme Project Document. It is built within the MedProgramme Support Child Project 4.1 and executed by the MedPCU in close coordination with all Child Projects. The purpose of the Strategy is to offer a structured and integrated approach to leverage and systematically share knowledge assets generated by the Child Projects with the intended beneficiaries and target audiences.
224. Between June 2022 and August 2023, the MedPCU was supported by a Knowledge Management Specialist who provided assistance to the Child Projects and the MedPCU for use of a wide spectrum of communication channels and tools for promotion of the MedProgramme and disseminate lessons learned and emerging good practices. In addition, a Medprogramme Communication Road Map was prepared as a recognition of the critical role communication plays for dissemination of results to a wide audience in the region, and for harmonisation and coordination of communication activities across the eight Child Projects.

225. In October 2023, the MedProgramme launched a project with the Global Resource Information Database - Geneva (GRID-Geneva)⁹ for development of a web-based Knowledge Management (KM) platform consisting of a data and information management system (with both public and restricted access) and a combination of visualization tools. Duration of the project is 1 year with completion expected in October 2024.
226. The KM platform is structured around three major components: a public facing website, an information visualization tool (using MapX) and a project management tool along with a collaborative working environment. It is expected to serve as a central repository of all the data generated by the nine Child Projects (CP) of the MedProgramme, with a view to fulfil a number of strategic knowledge management objectives. At the same time, each Child Project will be granted individual identities within the overall MedProgramme-branding in terms of creation of sub-websites within the KM platform, preparation of specific publications and social media services, among others.
227. In cooperation with the sister CP 4:1, the CP 1.1 has paid considerable attention to raising awareness at all levels about project itself as well as about the environmental issues facing the Mediterranean Sea. To date, it produced a considerable number of communication and public awareness materials, shared posts on social media, technical materials, field visit reports, contributions to the MedBulletin¹⁰, brochures with information on CP 1.1 (jointly with CP 1.3), technical information, as well as photos and videos from project activities. Those products were used to support participation at the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions, as well as at various awareness-raising events. Under cooperation with UNDP, data from PCB inventories and mercury assessment from Bosnia and Herzegovina has been visualised on MapX. Support has also been provided in terms of drafting. All the knowledge products are prepared for uploading to the KM platform once the latter is operational.
228. Information about the MedProgramme and its child projects is also available at the UNEP/MAP trilingual (English, French, some contents also in Arabic) public website that contains different types of documents and materials such as technical reports, meeting reports, case studies, country fact sheets, photos and videos. It also contains links to the websites of the co-executing partners.
229. Annual Stocktaking Meeting of the MedProgramme is yet another channel and modality of communication. The primary objective of the meeting is to enable face-to-face knowledge exchanges and promote broader adoption of MedProgramme approaches and solutions through synergistic interactions among the Child Projects. At the same time, the meeting provides an opportunity to engage with a broader audience of peers and stakeholders that share similar objective of achieving environmental security in the Mediterranean Basin.
230. Two Annual Stocktaking Meetings of the MedProgramme were organised on 2-3 November 2022 and on 22-24 April 2024, respectively. The meetings brought together representatives of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, as well as the MedProgramme's implementing and executing agencies. The meetings featured keynote speeches/lectures feeding into the themes of the MedProgramme, round table discussions on the scientific basis of the implemented activities, and panel discussions on challenges and lessons learned for the delivery of planned outputs of each CP.

⁹ The Global Resource Information Database - Geneva (GRID-Geneva), is a partnership between the UNEP, the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment and the University of Geneva with the main role to transform data into information and knowledge to support the decision making process related to environmental issues.

¹⁰ MedBulletin is the dedicated Newsletter of the MedProgramme It was launched in November 2022 and is produced semi annually.

231. The above knowledge products and communication channels are designed mainly for reaching out to rather specialised audience such as relevant government agencies in the project countries, international and national technical practitioners, and academia. The attempts on extension for awareness raising of general population was only marginal.
232. Through the contract with UNOPS, the MedProgramme recruited a knowledge management and communications specialist to support execution of MedProgramme KM Strategy and develop a Communication Strategy and related products for implementation of the KM Strategy. This assignment is expected to elaborate a solid narrative about the MedProgramme and its Child Projects and thus improve effectiveness of communication processes for information and engagement of project stakeholders, partners, and all categories of target audiences.
233. The above shows good progress made for achievement of systematic communication and information exchange about the MedProgramme approaches and with strong participation the CP 1.1. However, the progress could have been faster if the development of the KM platform was pursued from the very start of the MedProgramme implementation.

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Satisfactory

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross Cutting Issues: Moderately Satisfactory

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

234. The Child Project 1.1. is one of the eight child projects of the Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing Environmental Security that was designed as the third step in the 20 years of cooperation of UNEP/MAP and GEF in the Mediterranean Region and builds on the legal framework provided by the Barcelona Convention and its protocols.
235. The CP 1.1 was endorsed for implementation in February 2020, i.e. almost three years after its formulation had started in May 2017 and more than one year after the final Project Document was submitted to the GEF Secretariat for the GEF CEO endorsement. It is regional in nature as it includes 9 participating countries, and its planned duration is 60 months (5 years). This Mid-term Review was undertaken after the four years of the project implementation. The project is subject to joint execution by UNEP/MAP as the lead executing partner and two regional activity centres, namely MedWaves (previously SCP/RAC) and Plan Bleu, as co-executing partners
236. As the project was designed to be part of the GEF multi-focal area programmatic approach, it consists of two substantive components, one in the Chemicals and Waste focal area and the other in the International Waters focal area, and one supporting component on results dissemination and knowledge management that cuts across the two substantive components.
237. The project formulation was based on robust baseline data and highlighted two critical issues of environmental management in the Mediterranean, namely land-based pollution in coastal hotspots and catchment areas, and integrated water quality monitoring and data sharing systems.
238. Component 2 was designed for strengthening the integrated cooperation frameworks and is therefore strictly regional by nature, Component 1 addressing the reduction of wastes and harmful chemicals (POPs and mercury) in priority pollution hotspots scattered across the nine participating countries is in fact a packet of national projects. The links between the two components are missing at the level of the project design while there are only weak links at the level of implementation in few participating countries.
239. The initial phase of the project was impacted by the covid-19 restrictions that negatively affected the already complex process of converting the project planned activities into concrete interventions both at the regional and national levels. The main constraints were difficulties in direct assessment of the situation on the ground due to the covid-19 travel and social distancing restrictions in the first year of the project. Limited opportunities for direct consultations with national competent authorities and other relevant national stakeholders confounded definition of precise timelines for development of effective and timely actions and stakeholder involvement on the ground.
240. In addition to the above external challenge, the project faced internal challenge in terms of staff turnaround and reassignment in the executing partners that affected continuity of activity planning and execution as well as monitoring of progress at the level of the beneficiary countries. These challenges were further aggravated by complicated bureaucratic procedures for procurement of waste disposal services through UNON.
241. The CP 1.1 was conceived at the time when the GEF enabled exceptional access to funding for countries that have not yet ratified the Minamata Convention on expectation that such countries would accelerate the ratification process. Despite this expectation,

few project countries faced challenges that slowed down the ratification process. At the time of the MTR, three project countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco and Tunisia) were not yet parties to the Convention and this casted doubts on their eligibility to use the project funding for disposal of POPs.

242. The project team has taken several cases of adaptive management for addressing the above challenges and mitigate their negative effects in order to smoothen and accelerate implementation of the planned activities.
243. The project is now at the start of the 5th year of implementation. Due to the combined effect of covid-19 restrictions in the 1st year and slow progress of work on delivery of some sub-components in the following years, several project activities were delayed and/or modified. Despite several adaptive management measures of the project team, the delivery of some outputs has been slower than expected. Consequently, there is a risk that some end-of-project targets will not be achieved by the original project completion date of September 2025.

Table 12: Project Performance Ratings¹¹

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
Strategic Relevance		S
1. Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) Strategic Priorities	The CP 1.1 is fully aligned with the relevant parts of the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions as well as with the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. It contributes to the thematic subprogramme on chemicals and pollution action within the 2022-2025 UNEP Strategy and to the respective GEF-6 programming strategies for Chemicals & Waste and International Waters.	S
2. Complementarity with existing interventions/ Coherence	The implementation of the project shows proves complementarity to other recent and ongoing interventions working in the project countries on the same problem/issue, particularly for the CW component.	S
Quality of Project Design	Baseline situation identified and alternative scenarios defined in the Project Document. While the composition of activities under the four outputs of Component 1 is well structured with numbering and detailed description, the text on Component 2 contains mostly background information for the four outputs and activities are only listed at the end of each output section without further details.	MS
Effectiveness		
1. Theory of Change	The project design included a simplified version of the ToC with not full explanation of the intervention logic and missing ToC elements, in particular for the IW component.	MS
2. Availability of outputs	Despite several implementation challenges, the project has made decent progress towards delivery of the outputs on reduction of pollution. However, the progress on outputs for pollution prevention has been only marginal. There has also been steady progress on delivery of three of four outputs under the IW component.	MS

¹¹ Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, also on a six-point scale, from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU).

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
3. Progress towards project outcomes	Progress towards the outcomes under the CW component had been hampered by the procurement and staffing issues. Despite the progress achieved on three out of four outputs under the IW component, the work on the critical Output 2.2 has not started yet.	MU
4. Likelihood of impact	Based on the design of the project, it will not be able to identify immediate impacts of the reduced pollution in the coastal pollution hotspots.	MU
5. Adaptive management	Interventions of adaptive management to address implementation challenges taken in a timely manner. Their effectiveness remains to be seen as the AM interventions not fully completed	S
Financial Management	<i>To be inserted</i>	
Efficiency	Despite delays caused initially by Covid-19 and later by procurement issues, the project has made decent progress on delivery of the planned outputs. However, a no-cost project extension is necessary for completion of all activities within the remaining project time period.	MS
Monitoring and Reporting		
1. Monitoring of project implementation	M&E conducted in line with the ME Plan defined in the Project Document.	S
2. Project reporting	Available project reports sufficiently detailed and the reporting formats in compliance with the UNEP and GEF reporting standards.	S
Exit Strategy and Sustainability	No exit strategy planned in the Project Document.	N.A.
Factors Affecting Performance		
1. Project inception	The Inception Meeting for the entire MedProgramme was held in July 2020, 3 months after the official start of the implementation. The results for CP 1.1 are in line with the aim of the IM.	S
2. Quality of project management and supervision		MS
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	Participation of IA through annual PSC ensured systematically for the CW component but less for the IW component.	MS
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	The Project Management in general is of a satisfactory quality. However, resignation of staff at UNEP/MAP and MedWaves, slow succession recruitment and complicated procurement procedures at both EPs slowed down execution of outputs under Component 1.	MS
3. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Good stakeholders' participation through annual PSC and Stocktaking meetings and involvement of national experts in activities at country level. Most of the countries represented in PSC meetings by institutions mandated in CW only hence opportunities for cooperation btw CW and IW FAs not fully used.	MS
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	Gender Action Plan developed for the entire MedProgramme during the formulation phase. Regional gender assessment made for compilation of the regional TDA report based on inputs by 5 countries only.	MS
5. Environmental and social safeguards	Initial Environmental, Social and Economic Screening conducted and documented in line with the standard procedure and implementation of the project follows conclusions from ESES.	MS
6. Country ownership and driven-ness	Country ownership of Component 1 strong, for Component 2 is a bit weaker due to less intensive participation of IW stakeholders.	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
7. Communication and public awareness	Implemented jointly with sister project 4.1. MedProgramme Knowledge Management Strategy produced during the formulation phase. A number of KM products prepared by CP 1.1 used in communication with stakeholders.	S
Overall Project Performance Rating at Mid-Point		MS

B. Lessons learned

Lesson Learned #1:	Experience from implementation of the project has demonstrated the need for full staffing of the dedicated PCU to ensure timely implementation, reporting and delivery of planned outputs.
Context/comment:	The fully staffed PCU was very effective in adaptive management, monitoring implementation progress, engaging with external stakeholders, communicating results and knowledge products, and presenting the project at relevant international gatherings..
Lesson Learned #2:	The lack of a TOC and 'output to outcome' analysis during the project design resulted in lost opportunities to better test project assumptions and drivers, which would have provided valuable data to inform and refine project implementation strategies and approach.
Context/comment:	Project results achieved early on in the implementation create enthusiasm for achieving the project objectives and strengthen ownership by the participating countries.
Lesson Learned #3:	There are positive and negative aspects of UN-to-UN transfer agreements. For conclusion of such agreements, the UN partner organisations need time for review and approval of specific agreement provisions. While such agreement might meet the needs in case of ineffective coordination structures at the country level, the speed of implementation might be affected by specific rules and regulations of the receiving UN partner.
Context/comment:	The project used the UN-to-UN agreement mechanism for acceleration of regional procurement and implementation at country level. In reality, preparation of such agreements required considerable time. Nevertheless, experience gained from this project will be useful to UNEP for use of the UN-to-UN agreement mechanism in future projects with sizeable procurement components and for offsetting lack of presence at the country level as a non-resident UN agency.
Lesson Learned #4:	Weak national stakeholder representation in the PSC for the IW component of the project did not ensure internal coherence and links between the two project components at the level of the participating countries. The national representation should be based on consultations on CP 1.1 at the level of each participating country.

Context/comment:	The project was designed for establishing links between pollution reduction and environmental quality monitoring. As such links have not been established at the level of the participating countries, implementation of the CW and IW project components has been disjointed.
Lesson Learned #5:	Linking the component comprising concrete measures for reduction of coastal pollution hotspots with a component on general coastal pollution monitoring does not ensure ability to track impacts of the reduced pollution.
Context/comment:	The original idea of establishing impact of the reduction of pollution hotspots could work only if concrete monitoring programmes are established with indicators relevant to the pollutants addressed in the hotspots.

C. Recommendations

Recommendation #1:	<u>Project extension:</u> The project executing partners should prepare estimates for completion of their respective activities that will serve for preparation of a justified proposal for project extension of at least 6 months to be presented for approval by the extraordinary PSC meeting in September 2024. This proposal should also include budget revision to cover the increased costs of project management during the project extension period.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project has been affected by Covid-19 restrictions in the 1 st year and then by slow delivery in several areas. The remaining time until the originally planned project completion date is not sufficient for completion of all planned activities, particularly under Component 1.
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	PRF/target revision
Responsibility:	UNEP/MAP, MedWaves, Plan Bleu, UN Environment Economy Division
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Urgent – until 3Q 2024

244. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section V/C on Effectiveness and sub-section on Availability of Outputs

Recommendation #2:	<u>Stakeholder representation</u> The project executing partners should ensure that representation of all project countries at the PSC meetings includes also national focal institutions responsible for Component 2.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Representation of national focal institutions involved in Component 2 (International Waters) in the PSC meetings was weak for several countries. Consequently, discussion at the PSC meetings has almost exclusively focussed on implementation of the Chemicals and Waste part of the project with almost non-existent focus on links and cooperation between the two project components.
Priority Level:	Urgent
Type of Recommendation	Improvement
Responsibility:	UNEP/MAP, MedWaves, Plan Bleu, UN Environment Economy Division
Proposed implementation time-frame:	3Q 2024

245. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section V/F on Factors Affecting Performance and sub.-section on stakeholder participation

Recommendation #3:	<u>Budget revision:</u> The Executing Agency (MedPCU) should request approval of the Implementing Agency for revision of the project budget to repurpose part of the budget for mercury disposal for increase of the amount of PCB waste disposed
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project will make considerable savings from the planned budget for mercury waste disposal while at the same time exceeding the planned end-of-project target. However, due to delays in inventories and protracted procurement of disposal contracts not all planned targets will be achieved.

Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Budget revision
Responsibility:	Implementing Agency
Proposed implementation time-frame:	3 Q 2024

246. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section V/C on Effectiveness and sub-section on Availability of Outputs in relation to Outputs 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3

Recommendation #4:	Revision of PRF target MedProgramme PCU should elaborate justified estimation of quantities of PCB waste that can be realistically disposed of within the remaining project time and budget and prepare a proposal for revised end-of-project target for Output 1.1 for presentation to the next PSC meeting.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	There is a slow progress with identification of PCB waste for disposal in Tunisia. Based on estimation of required funding for achievement of the planned end-of-project target of disposal of 2,000 tons of PCB waste, the project will not be able to achieve this target.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	EoP target revision
Responsibility:	MedProgramme PCU
Proposed implementation time-frame:	3 Q 2024

247. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section V/C Effectiveness and sub-section on Availability of Outputs in relation to Outputs 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3

Recommendation #5:	Reporting: The MedProgramme PCU should systematically collect information on the actually realised co-financing broken down by sources of co-financing and report this information in 2024 PIR and subsequent annual PIRs
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The CP 1.1 was designed to attract considerable amount of co-financing. The actual status of co-financing is not reported with regard to co-financing sources.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Reporting
Responsibility:	MedProgramme PCU
Proposed implementation time-frame:	annually

248. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section V/B on Financial Management and sub-section on Completeness of Financial Information

Recommendation #6:	Repository of documents for TE The MedPCU should systematically compile all documents relevant for the project TE in line with the "List of Documents for MTR" and store them in a dedicated repository of project documentation available to project evaluators.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Relevant documents for MTR was provided on basis of ad-hoc requests to the MedPCU that slowed down the work of the evaluation consultant.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Reporting
Responsibility:	MedPCU
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Before TE

249. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section V/D on Monitoring and Reporting

Recommendation #7:	Monitoring of PCB and mercury sites In order to see direct impacts of the pollution reduction, the project partners should consider support for establishment of pollution monitoring programmes at the PCB- and mercury-contaminated sites
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	There are no links between the concrete pollution reduction measures under Component 1 and general coastal area pollution monitoring under Component 2.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Progress to impact
Responsibility:	Project partners
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Before end of the project

250. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section V/F Quality of Project Management and Supervision

Recommendation #8:	PCU strengthening The MedPCU should strengthen its administrative arm through accelerated recruitment of the Finance Budget Officer and Finance Assistant of the MedPCU
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The 2024 PSC agreed on budget repurposing for strengthening of the administrative arm of the MedPCU. Recruitment for the two administrative posts should be accelerated so that the project can benefit from stronger financial management for the remaining part of the implementation.
Priority Level:	Urgent
Type of Recommendation	PCU strengthening
Responsibility:	MedPCU
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Immediately

251. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section V/F Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

Recommendation #9:	Gender assessment The MedPCU should ensure that the gender specialist recruited by UNOPS conducts assessment of implementation of the CP 1.1 Gender Action Plan and provide recommendations for a more targeted approach of future interventions so that these can benefit from the gender-responsive actions and capacity building.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	A specific Gender Action Plan was developed at the outset of CP 1.1. Several gender-related actions were reported in the annual PIRs but gender mainstreaming was not reported in a systematic manner with relation to the CP 1.1 GAP.
Priority Level:	Urgent
Type of Recommendation	Gender mainstreaming
Responsibility:	MedPCU
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Immediately

ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the reviewers, where appropriate

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Reviewer Response
Par-14	Documents were made available on TEAMS, awaiting the completion and operation of the platform/Project Management tool	Yet the reviewer did not have the full package of documents before the start of the data collection. No action taken.
Par. 23	Question whether it is with regard to UN-to-UN agreements or SSFAs.	The text of the paragraph clearly says it is with regard to UN-to-UN agreements. This is based on the experience with UNOPs and UNDP agreements. No action taken.
Par. 24	Reference to earlier comment on para 12.	Text of par. 12 (which is finding) was amended in line with the comment. However, par. 24 is a lesson learned based on the finding in par. 12 therefore no change needed.
Par.26	The decision is already taken in the 4 th SCM, as per the ICA dated 12 July 2024	This decision was not available during the report drafting phase. This fact should be reflected in management response to recommendations. No change needed in this report.
Par. 28	Request for budget repurpose	Text revised that EA should request the approval of IA (also changed in Recommendation 3 on p. 55)
Par.33	Staffing of the PCU	The same as the response on par. 26. At the time of drafting of the report, the two post were still vacant (at https://www.unep.org/unepmap/who-we-are/contact-us)
Fig. 2	Add comparison between the original and revised ToC	The comparison is clear from the text (Paras 64-73). It is not possible to add all this into the figure.

ANNEX II. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
UNEP	Eloise Touni	GEF CW Task Manager	IA representative	F
UNEP/MAP	Mohamad Kayyal	Programme Management Officer	PCU member	M
UNEP/MAP	Olfat Hamdan	Programme Management Officer	MED POL PCU member	F
UNEP/MAP	Maren Mellendorf	Programme Management Officer (April 2022 - February 2024)	PCU member	F
UNEP/MAP	Alessandro Candeloro	Short-term expert	IW specialist	M
UNEP/MAP	Marialena Vyzaki	Short-term expert	Gender specialist	F
UNEP/MAP	James Kenge Gunya	Short-term expert	Information specialist	M
MedWaves	Jordi Moles Matinero	Project Manager	Executive partner representative	M
EBRD	Hande Yukseler	Project Manager ENVITECC	IA representative (CP 1.3)	F
National Environmental Agency Albania	Enkeleda Shkurta	Head of Information Sector, GIS and Environmental Registers	Country Focal Point	F
Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Senad Oprašić	Head of Environmental Protection Department	Country Focal Point	M
	Azra Rogović-Grubić	Senior Adviser for International Cooperation	Focal Point for the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions	F
FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism	Almira Kapetanović	Head of Waste Management Department	Ministry with executive responsibility for waste management	F
UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina	Alma Mirivić	Energy and Environment Sector	Project Manager – PCB project	F
	Marina Mujezinović		Field Officer – PCB project	F
Enova d.o.o. Bosnia and Herzegovina	Maja Maretić-Tiro	Department for Environmental Protection and Waste Management	Experts on PCB inventory	F
	Melina Valjevac			F
University of Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Zvezdan Karadžin	Faculty for Mining, Geology and Civil Engineering	Technical Coordinator of SSFA on HAK-1 mercury assessment	M
	Jasmin Isabegović		Technical Expert, SSFA	M
				M
Hydro-Engineering Institute Sarajevo Bosnia and Herzegovina	Selma Cengiç	Executive Director	Co-authors of TDA National Assessment for Bosnia and Herzegovina	F
	Senida Dzajić-Rghei	Independent Researcher		F
Ministry of Environment, Lebanon	Sabbagh Bassam	Head of Service, Urban Environment	Country Focal Point	M
Center for Ecotoxicological Research	Danijela Suković	Advisor to the Executive Director for Laboratory Affairs	Technical experts for SSFA on Boka Bay Assessment	F

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
Podgorica, Montenegro	Vladimir Živković	Research Associate		M
Ministry of Environment, Tunisia	Youssef Zidi	Director of Industrial Environment	Country Focal Point National FP for the Stockholm Convention	M
UNDP Tunisia	Bochra Jaouani	Project Officer	Coordinator of UN-to-UN agreement in Tunisia	F
University of Tunis El Manar	Saïd Tlig	Professor, Hydrogeology Department	Expert for SSFA on socio-economic assessment of the Minamata Convention	M
Tunisia's Association de l'Education Environnementale pour les Futures Générations	Semia Gharbi	Chairperson	Representative of NGO active in gender in waste management	F
Centro de Investigaciones Energéticas, Medioambientales y Tecnológicas (CIEMAT)	Rocio Millan Gomez	Senior Expert	Coordinator of SSFA on EMP for Kasserine site	F

ANNEX III. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project planning and reporting documents

- Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hot Spots and Measuring Progress to Impacts, Project Document with annexes, UNEP, 2018
- Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hot Spots and Measuring Progress to Impacts, GEF CEO Endorsement Letter, 2020
- Report from the Kickoff and Inception Meeting of the Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme), UNEP, 2020
- Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) for GEF fiscal years 2021, 2022, and 2023, UNEP/GEF
- Project Steering Committee Meetings for 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024, UNEP

Project Output 1.1: Management and disposal of 2,000 tonnes of POPs

- Contract for provision of service for the drainage, packaging, labelling, transportation, shipment and sound disposal of PCB oils, PCB contaminated oils, and PCB equipment from Lebanon, UNON Procurement Section, 2023
- Contract for provision of service for the drainage, packaging, labelling, transportation, shipment and sound disposal of PCB oils, PCB contaminated oils, and PCB equipment from Algeria, UNON Procurement Section, 2023
- Regional PCB waste elimination plan under Child Project 1.1, MedPCU, 2024

Project Output 1.2: Management and safe storage of 50 tonnes of mercury

- PCB disposal, Its prioritization, and capacity-building for mercury: Report from the meeting in Athens, MedPCU, 2023
- Environmentally sound management (ESM) plan towards mercury disposal and remediation at HAK 1, Tuzla: Final Report, University of Tuzla, 2024
- Conceptual plan of construction waste management for the removal of electrolysis facility in the former HAK 1 complex in Tuzla, University of Tuzla, 2024
- Conceptual project for removal or remediation of contaminated facility, water and soil with mercury from HAK 1 area Tuzla, University of Tuzla, 2024
- Assessment of the contamination of the harbor beds with PCBs and mercury, and its risks assessment at Tivat Bay and Risan Harbour in Montenegro, Centre for Ecotoxicological Research, 2024
- Evaluation des impacts environnementaux, sociaux et économiques de la ratification de la Convention de Minamata sur le mercure, UNDP, 2024

Project Output 2.1: Updated TDA including gender assessment

- Mediterranean Sea and Coasts – Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis, Pollution & Ecosystems, MEDPOL/UNEP/MAR, 2023
- Analysis of transboundary issues of relevance for coastal belts in BiH including determination of impacts and causal chain analysis and recommendation, Hydro-Engineering Institute Sarajevo, 2023
- Analyse diagnostique transfrontalière: rapport d'évaluation de la méditerranée Marocaine, National team of consultants, 2023

Project Output 2.3: Offshore monitoring strategy and identification of 20 locations for the offshore monitoring stations

- Integrated monitoring and assessment programme of the mediterranean sea and coast (IMAP) - a strategy for an extension offshore: Stocktaking Report, MEDPOL/UNEP/MAP 2022
- Integrated monitoring and assessment programme of the mediterranean sea and coast (IMAP) - a strategy for an extension offshore:: Offshore Protocol – IMAP monitoring programme and strategy, MEDPOL/UNEP/MAP 2022
- Review of the draft offshore strategy document (2022) and operational modalities to support imap implementation in offshore areas, MEDPOL/UNEP/MAP 2024

Project Output 2.4:

- MAP Data Policy: Decision IG.25/10, UNEP/MED IG.25/27, 2021

Previous reviews/evaluations

- Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem – Regional Component: Implementation of agreed actions for the protection of the environmental resources of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal areas, Terminal Evaluation Report, UNEP/GEF, 2016
- Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem – Regional Component: Implementation of Agreed Actions for the Protection of the Environmental Resources of the Mediterranean Sea and its Coastal Areas, Mid-Term Evaluation Report, UNEP/GEF 2013
- Environmentally Sound Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in industrial and hazardous waste sectors in BiH, Mid-Term Evaluation Report, UNDP, 2022

Reference documents

- UNEP Evaluation Policy, rev. October 2022
- Glossary of Results Definitions, UNEP, ver. 8, 2023
- Guidance on the Structure and Contents of the Mid-Term Evaluation Report, UNEP, 2023
- GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, GEF Evaluation Office, 2010
- Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations, UNEG, 2014
- Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations, UNEG, 2020

ANNEX IV. REVIEW SCHEDULE

The review schedule in the MTR Terms of Reference was adapted to the available time frame for conduct and completion of the MTR. The main phases of the MTR schedule is presented below.

MTR Milestone	Timeline
Initial review of essential documents and preparation of the MTR Inception Report	March to mid- April 2024
On-line interviews, review of the Project Information Package and preparation of the evaluation field missions	Until end of May 22024
MTR missions to selected countries, in person interviews and data analysis	June 2024
Submission of draft MTR report	15 July 2024
Submission of final MTR report and Audit Trail	15 August 2024

ANNEX V. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS

<https://www.unep.org/unepmap/news/news/three-pronged-endeavor-pcb-free-mediterranean>

<https://www.unep.org/unepmap/index.php/news/news/tackling-mercury-pollution-bosnia-and-herzegovina-qa-medprogramme>

<https://www.unep.org/unepmap/news/news/first-stocktaking-meeting-gef-unep-medprogramme>

<https://fintecc.ebrd.com/news/second-annual-stocktaking-meeting-of-the-medprogramme>

<https://iwlearn.net/news/outcomes-of-the-2nd-annual-stakeholders-meeting-medprogramme>

<https://fintecc.ebrd.com/news/invisible-threat---new-pops-in-water>

<https://fintecc.ebrd.com/news/first-issue-of-the-medbulletin>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruxy9S1fzgU>

Insert any communication and outreach tools used to disseminate results (e.g. power point presentations, charts, graphs, videos, case studies, etc.) or provide links.

ANNEX VI. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Name	Dalibor Kysela
Profession	Independent Consultant to UN organisations, former staff member of UNIDO, IAEA and UNDP
Nationality	Czech Republic/Slovak Republic
Country experience	- Europe: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Russian Federation, Ukraine - Africa: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia - Americas: Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru - Central Asia and Caucasus: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan - South and East Asia: Bangladesh, China, DPR Korea, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam - West Asia: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen
Education	- MSc. – Pollution and Environmental Control - Dipl. Ing. – Analytical Chemistry

Dalibor Kysela graduated in Analytical Chemistry at the Bratislava Technical University and in Pollution and Environmental Control at the Victoria University of Manchester. After serving as a Head of Environmental Laboratory of the Public Health Institute in Slovakia, he joined the international development community and served as Project Officer in the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS, as Evaluation Officer in the IAEA, and Project Management Officer in UNIDO. In retirement, he acts as an independent Evaluation Consultant to UN agencies.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Chemicals and waste management
- Renewable energy and energy efficiency
- River basin and coastal management

Selected assignments and experiences

Independent reviews/evaluations:

- Reducing UPOPs and Mercury Releases from the Health Sector in Africa (UNDP/GEF) – TE
- Eliminating POPs through Sound Management of Chemicals in the Maldives (UNDP/GEF) - Mid-Term Review
- PCB Management in Ethiopia to meet the 2025 Stockholm Convention deadline - Phase 1 (UNDP/GEF) - Mid-Term Review
- Integrated Sound Management of Mercury in Indonesia's Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ISMIA) - (UNDP/ GEF) Mid-term Review.
- Sound Chemicals Management Mainstreaming and UPOPs reduction in Kenya (UNDP/GEF) - Terminal Evaluation
- Belarus POPs Legacy and Sustainable Chemicals Management (UNDP/GEF) - MTR
- Comprehensive Environmentally Sound Management of PCBs in Montenegro (UNDP/GEF) - Mid-Term Review
- Rwanda Management of PCB Stockpiles and Equipment Containing PCBs (UNDP/GEF) - Terminal Evaluation 30
- Vietnam POPs and Sound Harmful Chemicals Management Project - Mid-term review
- Initial Implementation of Accelerated HCFC Phase Out in the CEIT Region (UNDP/GEF) – TE
- Advancing Integrated Water Resource Management Across the Kura River Basin (UNDP/GEF) - Mid-term Review

- Implementation of the Arafura and Timor Seas Regional and National Strategic Action Programs (ATSEA-2); Second Phase of the Arafura Timor Seas Ecosystem Action (ATSEA) Programme, (UNDP/GEF), Mid-Term review



ANNEX VII. REVIEW TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)

UNITED

NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

Terms of reference

<i>Job Opening number</i>	:	23-United Nations Environment Programme-222215-Consultant
<i>Job Title</i>	:	Midterm Review Consultant
<i>General Expertise</i>	:	Programme Management
<i>Category</i>	:	Project Management
<i>Department/ Office</i>	:	United Nations Environment Programme
<i>Organizational Unit</i>	:	UNEP ODED IED CHEM GEF

Purpose

The objectives of the work are to support the UNEP/Industry and Economy Division/Chemicals and Health branch/ GEF C&WU by conducting Midterm Review for the project "Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hot Spots and Measuring Progress to Impacts" (GEF ID 9684).

Duties and Responsibilities

Organizational Setting:

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. The overall objective of the UNEP's Economy Division is to encourage decision-makers in government, local authorities and industry to develop and adopt policies, strategies and practices and technologies that promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production, make efficient use of natural resources, ensure safe management of chemicals and contribute to making trade and environment policies mutually supportive. It promotes the development, use and transfer of policies, technologies, economic instruments, managerial practices and other tools that assist in environmentally sound decision making and the building of corresponding activities. The GEF Chemicals and Waste Unit of the Chemicals and Health Branch is responsible for the development and management of all GEF projects implemented by UNEP in the Chemicals and Wastes focal area. The Programme Management Officer is primarily responsible for the supervision of and support to the GEF Unit Task Manager (GEF implementation) team based in Geneva and Nairobi and home based for consultant. The team is responsible for the identification, development and implementation of projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UNEP.

UNEP is the implementing agency (IA) for GEF projects and is tasked to carry out Midterm Reviews (MTR) of eligible projects as per the GEF and UNEP evaluation rules. To carry out such reviews of project, UNEP requires the services of specialized consultants to measure progress made towards the achievement of outcomes and to provide necessary recommendations.

To this end, project entitled "Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hot Spots and Measuring Progress to Impacts" (GEF ID 9684) requires carrying out a MTR. It is a Child Project under the GEF/UN Environment "Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing Environmental Security", a GEF programmatic multi-focal area initiative in ten beneficiary countries sharing the Mediterranean basin: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey.

This MTR will analyse whether the child project is on-track, what problems or challenges the project is encountering, and what corrective actions are required. The MTR will assess project performance to date (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine the likelihood of the project achieving its intended outcomes and supporting their sustainability.

Reporting Lines:

Under the overall supervision of the GEF C&W Unit portfolio manager, the consultant shall report directly to the GEF C&W and International Waters Task Manager, Ms Eloise Touni, Programme Management Officer on day-to-day basis. Final deliverables shall also be approved by the C&W Portfolio Manager.

Specific duties and responsibilities:

All the activities related to the MTR are to be carried out as per UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme Manual. The Mid-Term Review will use a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the review process. Both quantitative and qualitative review methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the Review Consultant maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the review implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the review findings.

The Review Consultant should provide a geo-referenced map that demarcates the area covered by the project and provide geo-reference photographs of key intervention sites (e.g. sites of habitat rehabilitation and protection, pollution treatment infrastructure, etc.)

The findings of the Review will be based on the following:

- A desk review of:
 - o Relevant background documentation, inter alia:
 - o Project Document and Appendices
 - o Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;
 - o Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence and including the Project Implementation Reviews and Tracking Tool etc.;
 - o Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects.
- Interviews (individual or in group) with:
 - o UNEP Task Manager (TM) and team members;
 - o Representatives of Executing Agencies and national governments;
 - o UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO);
 - o Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's, farmers and trade associations etc).
- Field visits: A minimum of two country visits, one to a South Mediterranean and one to an Eastern Mediterranean country, to be proposed by the Reviewer in their Inception Report; plus visits to the Executing Agency in Athens and MedWaves in Barcelona.
- Other data collection tools: to be determined by the Review Consultant at the inception phase

Ultimate result of service

Midterm Review of 9684 MedProgramme Child Project 1.1 project completed as per the requirements of UNEP and GEF

Travel Details

A minimum of two country visits, one to a South Mediterranean and one to an Eastern Mediterranean country, to be proposed by the Reviewer in their Inception Report; plus visits to the Executing Agency in Athens and MedWaves in Barcelona.

Travel	Per Diem	Other	Total
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0	0	0	0
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Output/Work Assignments

Inception report cleared by Task Manager (Payment amount: USD 8,000; Estimated delivery date: March 2024)

Preliminary findings power-point and draft MTR report cleared by Task Manager (Payment amount: USD 15,000; Estimated delivery date: May 2024)

Final MTR report cleared by all stakeholders (Payment amount: USD 10,000; Estimated delivery date: August 2024)

Contract Duration

Overall Contract Duration:	5.5 months
Estimated amount of actual time to worked (days, weeks, months):	5.5 months
Regular Working Hours (if applicable):	
Total Remuneration:	33,000
Payment Terms:	Fees only basis, as per schedule of payment

Qualification Requirements/Evaluation Criteria

Education: A university degree in environmental sciences/engineering, marine or ecosystem science, international development or other relevant area is required. An advanced degree in the same areas is desirable.

Language: Fluency in English and knowledge of French languages is required. Knowledge of Arabic is desirable.

JFQ/JSQ: A minimum of 7 years of technical / evaluation experience in projects and programmatic approaches is required.

Experience evaluating large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach is desirable.

Good/broad understanding of POPs, mercury and hazardous waste is desirable.

Working knowledge of the UN system and specifically the work of UNEP is desirable.

Supervisor Name: _____

Title: _____

ANNEX VIII. GEF PORTAL INPUTS

The following table contains text to be uploaded to the GEF Portal. It is drawn from the Review Report, either as copied or summarised text. In each case, references are provided for the paragraphs and pages of the report from which the responses have been copied or summarised.

Table 13: GEF portal inputs

Question: What is the performance at the project's mid-point against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided)	
Responses:	
GEF Core Indicators	Indicative expected Results
Indicator 7: Number of shared water ecosystems (fresh or marine) under new or improved cooperative management	Visible progress on update TDA Mediterranean Sea (paragraph 122-126) A draft proposal for an offshore monitoring strategy as part of under the existing Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) prepared (paragraph 130)
Indicator 7.1: Level of Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Program (TDA/SAP) formulation and implementation - 4	Updated regional TDA report based on 5 national TDA reports approved for publication by the UNEP Publication Board and for development of the National Action Plan (NAP) and National Baseline Budget (NBB) reports in 9 countries
Indicator 7.2: Level of Regional Legal Agreements and Regional management institution(s) (RMI) to support its implementation -	Not applicable. This indicator is not transferred into the Project Results Framework and to planned activities
Indicator 7.3: Level of National/Local reforms and active participation of Inter-Ministerial Committees - 1	Not applicable. This indicator is not transferred into the Project Results Framework and to planned activities
Indicator 7.4: Level of engagement in IWLEARN through participation and delivery of key products- 1	Not applicable. This indicator is not transferred into the Project Results Framework and to planned activities
Indicator 9.1: Solid and liquid Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) removed or disposed (POPs type) Polychlorinated biphenyls 1,350 MT Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid. 20 MT Hexabromocyclododecane 630 MT	Two disposal contracts for total 721 tons of PCB waste signed (Algeria 451.95 t, Lebanon 271 t). Confirmed for phase 2: Albania (255 t), BiH (12 t), Montenegro (80 t) - Table 7 Output 1.1 Inventory of new POPs in progress (Morocco and Tunisia) but achievement of the target not realistic (paragraph 117 and 119)
Indicator 9.2: Quantity of mercury reduced – 50 MT	Assessment of mercury-contaminated sites completed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Tunisia, contract to be signed for disposal of 389 MT mercury waste from Kasserine, Tunisia
Indicator 9.4: Number of countries with legislation and policy implemented to control chemicals and waste - 3	Legislation in place in all project countries, but slow progress towards ratification of Minamata Convention on Bosnia/Herzegovina and Tunisia (paragraph 110 -113)
Indicator 9.5: Number of low-chemical/non-chemical systems implemented, particularly in food production, manufacturing and cities - 3	Not applicable. This indicator is not transferred into the Project Results Framework and to planned activities
Indicator 9.6: Quantity of POPs/Mercury containing materials and products directly avoided – 300 MT	Inventories of mercury in only total 10 health care facilities completed in Tunisia and Lebanon. Unlikely to reach the target (paragraph 119 and 120)

Indicator 11: Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment – 4,000 (2,000 F + 2,000 M)	Not applicable. This indicator is not transferred into the Project Results Framework and to planned activities, hence information not collected
Question: What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/programme?	
Response: Under Component 1, stakeholders from the level of national governments and from the national technical teams participated in the Annual Stocktaking Meeting and in PCB trainings. Cooperation with national stakeholders facilitated progress and in some countries completion of PCB inventories and mercury assessments (paragraph 193). In Component 2, the main avenue for stakeholder participation was the establishment of the Steering Committee for the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis. Further participation included engagement of relevant institutions in five project countries for preparation of national TDA reports, and engagement for preparation of a stocktaking report on technical and scientific capabilities for offshore monitoring. However, there was no attempt for systematic involvement of the Mediterranean EU member countries. Participation of those countries would increase the value of the regional TDA and establish grounds for expansion of the offshore monitoring network (paragraph 194). The PSC meetings were supposed to bring together both Chemicals and Waste (CW) and International Water (IW) stakeholders. However, this was the case only for few countries while others were represented only by Chemicals and Waste stakeholders. Weak representation of the IW stakeholders did not contribute to transparency and collaboration of stakeholders across the two Focal Areas (paragraph 195).	
Question: What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding gender-responsive measures and any intermediate gender result areas?	
Response: An in-depth presentation was prepared for the 3rd meeting of the MedProgramme Gender Community of Practice. Further activities included presentation on gender aspects in occupational health and safety for handling PCBs in Lebanon in November 2022, on-line presentation on "Gender Issues in Chemicals & Waste" held in Tunisia in June 2023, as well as outlines of case studies with gender aspects of occupational exposure to mercury in hospitals in Tunisia and Lebanon. (paragraph 201) As part of the TDA update, a gender/socio-economic assessment was developed focusing on how gender relates to transboundary water issues, pollution of marine ecosystems, identifying also future scenarios and gender-specific risks in the use of chemicals. A gender presentation providing an overview of Chapter 5 of the TDA on gender was developed and delivered during the 2nd meeting of the TDA Steering Committee in December 2022 (paragraph 205).	
Question: What has been the experience at the project's mid-point against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval? The risk classifications reported in the latest PIR report should be verified and any measures taken to address identified risks assessed.	
Response: At the formulation phase, the CP 1.1 was subject to UNEP Environmental, Social and Economic Screening conducted using a standardised procedure for assessment and rating of probability, impact and significance of risks related to nine thematic safeguards that UNEP considers important for implementation of its projects. The result of the screening is summarised in the Environmental, Social and Economic Review Note provided as Annex I to the Project Document. The screening identified moderate risks related to the possibility of an accident or spill during the repackaging, transport and environmentally sound destruction of PCB and mercury wastes addressed by the project. The identified risks will be managed through preparation of an initial Environmental Management Plan (EMP) prepared by qualified consultants and an Environment, Health and Safety (EHS) document prepared by waste disposal contractors detailing the precautionary and emergency measures to be in place before operations begin (paragraph 207, 208 and 209). The project design includes a Phase 1 of disposal activities in two countries (Algeria and Lebanon), for which the site-specific EMPs included as Annex of the request for GEF CEO Endorsement. For Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, draft EMPs are available as Annex for a PCB disposal procurement request. The EHS documents will be developed by the selected bidders to	

include assessment of risks which are regularly monitored by the national authorities and Executing Agency during the supervision of implementation of the PCB disposal contracts (paragraph 210 and 211).

Question: What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding the implementation of the project's Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions.

Response: The MedProgramme engaged with the Global Resource Information Database - Geneva (GRID-Geneva) for development of a web-based Knowledge Management (KM) platform consisting of a data and information management system (with both public and restricted access) and a combination of visualization tools. The KM platform is expected to serve as a central repository of all the data generated by the nine Child Projects (CP) of the MedProgramme, with a view to fulfil a number of strategic knowledge management objectives while, at the same time, granting individual identities to the Child Projects (paragraph 225 and 226).

In cooperation with the sister CP 4.1, the CP 1.1 has paid considerable attention to raising awareness at all levels about project itself as well as about the environmental issues facing the Mediterranean Sea. To date, it produced a considerable number of communication and public awareness materials, shared posts on social media, technical materials, field visit reports, contributions to the MedBulletin, brochures with information on CP 1.1 (jointly with CP 1.3), technical information, as well as photos and videos from project activities. 230. Two Annual Stocktaking Meetings of the MedProgramme were organised on 2-3 November 2022 and on 22-24 April 2024, respectively. The meetings brought together representatives of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, as well as the MedProgramme's implementing and executing agencies (paragraph 227 and 2230).

Question: What are the main findings of the review?

Response: The particular strength of the project design is the aim to develop linkages between the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions and their delivery mechanisms at national and regional level for capacity on chemicals and waste to be linked across thematic and sectoral boundaries. The justification of the project is based on the fundamental and pressing issue linking environmental quality and human health.

By focusing on the Barcelona Convention processes and its governance mechanisms, the project offers a framework for the regional cooperation with the potential to consolidate all the information derived from various fragmented initiatives implemented in the Mediterranean and produce a comprehensive and coherent diagnostic focused on transboundary issues. Another strength of the project is its focus on harmonization of the existing data platforms, monitoring protocols and common indicators to comply with the Barcelona Convention's ecosystem approach-based Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP).

The linking of the Chemicals and Waste and International Waters components under the umbrella of a single Child Project was driven by the aim to see how the reduction of land-based pollution by POPs and mercury is reflected in reduced environmental stress and improved status of coastal waters in the Mediterranean.

The above underlying idea of the project is at the same time also its main weakness as it aims to combine interventions on scattered land-based pollution hotspots as purely national initiatives with very few possibilities for regional grouping with transboundary assessment of the marine ecosystem as essentially regional in nature. Moreover, reduction of land-based pollution and work on transboundary issues in coastal regions involve different stakeholders and face dissimilar technical as well as political challenges.

The project is on track for delivery of the two waste reduction outputs under Component 1 in terms of management and safe disposal of PCBs and management and safe storage of mercury waste (Outputs 1.1 and 1.2), although the progress has been relatively slow as a result of the initial delays in contracting the waste removal services and time-consuming procedures for obtaining all documentation required in line with the provisions of the Basel Convention.

On the contrary, the progress on the two outputs addressing prevention of waste has been only marginal, in particular on Output 1.4 dealing with prevention of mercury waste. The project is behind

the planned schedule, and it is likely that it will not achieve the planned waste prevention target by the project completion date at the end of March 2025.

While there has been visible progress towards development of three out of four outputs of Component 2, these are general outputs not directly linked to identification of impacts of the specific land-based pollution reduction addressed through the waste reduction and prevention outputs of Component 1. Implementation of the fourth output that is based on analysis and compilation of information generated under Component 1 has not started yet.

Representation in the PSC meetings of national focal institutions involved in the International Waters part of the project was weak for several countries. Consequently, discussion at the PSC meetings has almost exclusively focussed on implementation of the Chemicals and Waste part of the project with almost non-existent focus on links and cooperation between the two project components.

The project reporting has been conducted in line with the requirements of GEF and the progress reports found to be sufficiently detailed and the reporting formats in compliance with the UNEP and GEF reporting standards. In general, the project reporting ensured transparent information flow across the executing partners and the project key stakeholders.

However, access of the MTR consultant to various project-related documents, such as workplans, budget revisions, terms of references, contracts and their deliverables, was possible only on basis of ad-hoc requests as there is no repository of the relevant project documentation required for the MTR.

The project's financial resources have been managed in compliance with relevant UNEP/GEF financial management standards and procedures. The project financial information broken down by components and years of implementation was available for the MTR. However, information on actually realised co-financing by the project partners and beneficiary has not been systematically tracked during the project implementation. (paragraphs 5-15)

ANNEX IX. GEF RISKS TO ACHIEVING PROJECT OUTCOMES (for GEF funded projects)

Summarize risks that might affect the achievement of desired outcomes and the mitigation measures which are planned or already undertaken to address these. The risk rating should reflect the *residual* risk to achieving outcomes after considering the implementation of mitigation measures. The rating scale is: High, Substantial, Moderate, Low. See the *GEF Risk Appetite* document ([GEF/C.66/13](#)) for more information and its Annex B for a description of each risk category. Note that the rating for the "Environment and Social" category should be the same as the risk rating for Safeguards.

RISK CATEGORIES	RATINGS	ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES
CONTEXT		
Climate	Low	No mitigating measures needed
Environment and Social	Moderate	Risk of environmental degradation during PCB and mercury waste collection, packing and transport. Monitor implementation of the disposal activities in line with the Environment, Health and Safety (EHS) document.
Political and Governance	Moderate	Project has been successful in building up ownership, interest and commitment of Government institutions and stakeholders despite political challenges in few project countries. However, political instability in southern part of the region persists. Monitor political development and adjust implementation accordingly.
INNOVATION		
Institutional and Policy	Moderate	Slow progress in ratification of the Minamata Convention in few countries could hamper disposal of mercury waste. Assist the countries in the ratification process.
Technological	Low	No mitigation measures needed
Financial and Business Model	Moderate	Lack of government co-financing could decrease completion of waste disposal activities. Mobilise co-financing from the participating governments.
EXECUTION		
Capacity for Implementation	Moderate	Implementation could slow down in case of understaffed PMU. Accelerate recruitment for full staffing of the PMU.
Fiduciary	Low	No mitigating measures needed
Stakeholder	Moderate	Lack of participation of stakeholders in the International Waters component could hinder work on the impact report. Encourage more active participation of the IW stakeholders.
Other	n.a.	n.a.
Overall Risk Rating	Moderate	Aggregate of the above rating