



**Mediterranean
Action Plan**
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24th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the
Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment
and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols

Cairo, Egypt, 2-5 December 2025

Agenda Item 5: Ministerial Session

Background Note for Ministerial Discussions at COP 24

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Background note for ministerial discussions at COP 24

1. The Meetings of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COPs) constitute the principal intergovernmental gathering dedicated to the marine and coastal environment and sustainable development in the Mediterranean region. Accordingly the COP agendas include elements related to the vision and the actions to promote a healthy and productive Mediterranean, adapting the responses to the most urgent environmental and climatic challenges, while embedding the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the challenges ahead, as well as the synergies with relevant regional and global frameworks and commitments as cross cutting pillars of a regional governance and successful cooperation.
2. Following the ambitious commitments of the COP23 Portoroz Ministerial Declaration (5-8 December 2023, Portoroz, Slovenia) on accelerating progress towards “Green transition in the Mediterranean: from decisions to actions”, by seeking to place the region on alternative pathways of sustainability and resilience, COP24 marks an important and strategic milestone for the advancement of forefront regional cooperation, Good Environmental Status and Sustainable Development Goals in the region;
3. 2025 represents a landmark year for the protection, conservation and sustainable use of marine environment of the Mediterranean, both at global and regional level, witnessed by a reviewed momentum and high-level engagement. At global level, 2025 coincides with the 3rd UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-3, Nice, France, 9-13 June 2025) that gave renewed impetus to the acceleration of global efforts and mobilization of all actors towards the conservation and sustainable use of the Ocean and the achievement of SDG 14;
4. The seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) will take place on 8-12 December 2025 in Nairobi, under the theme “Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet”. UNEA-7 will address emerging and urgent environmental issues and will aim to reinforce the collective determination of the international community to ensure a vibrant and balanced environment that supports humanity’s progress toward peaceful, prosperous, and thriving societies;
5. Furthermore, in September 2025 the critical threshold of 60-country ratification of the historic Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) was achieved, setting in motion the treaty’s entry into force for 17 January 2026;
6. This biennium also welcomed the activation of numerous concrete new commitments such as the 9th Our Ocean Conference (OOC-9, Athens, Greece, 15-17 April 2024); the Resolution 15 of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6, 26 February-1 March 2024) on Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution; the UN Pact for the Future adopted in the framework of the Summit of the Future on 22 September 2024; the entry into force of the designation of the Mediterranean Sea as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter (Med SOx ECA) further limiting air pollution from ships, pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI;
7. Regionally, this landmark year also coincides with the 50th anniversary of UNEP/MAP and the 30th anniversary of the post-Rio Barcelona Convention that has been celebrated by a high-level event and a milestone achievement during the UNOC-3, the Declaration of the Ministers of the Mediterranean, who have renewed their long-standing commitment to protect and preserve the Mediterranean Sea and its sustainability, while further enhancing regional cooperation and dialogue;
8. The UNEP/MAP Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035, whose decision UNEP/MED IG.27/7 is submitted to the COP 24 for endorsement, is inspired by the high-level momentum to boost sustainable development in the Mediterranean, and raises the level of ambition to accelerate progress toward achieving the SDGs. It does so, by embedding and reinforcing actions and flagship initiatives related to climate change as a cross cutting priority, enhanced management of marine and coastal areas *inter alia* through Marine Spatial Planning, energy transition and deployment of renewable energies, application of nature-based solutions,

reduction of waste generation, promotion of the WEF Nexus approach and sustainable management of water and forests, improvement of air quality, green transition and adoption of circular business models of key economic sectors as blue economy, sustainable finance, improved environmental and institutional governance, enhanced role of local authorities as key implementers, engagement with civil society, including youth and women as well as private sector involvement;

9. The upcoming EU Pact for the Mediterranean renews and elevates the EU's ambition to engage more deeply with countries across the Mediterranean region;
10. A few years ago, the 2021 Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy and related Roadmap for implementation, as well as the 2023 Ministers Declaration of the WestMed Initiative to promote Sustainable Blue Economy in the Western Mediterranean, represent a key reference to promote Sustainable Blue Economy as regional common priority;
11. A few months after UNOC-3 and only one week ahead of the upcoming UNEA-7, COP 24 presents an agenda of strategic importance as it showcases, regionally and globally, 50 years of seamless leadership on environmental multilateralism, regional cooperation and solidarity, while highlighting the role of Sustainable Blue Economy as key component of the solutions for a smart green transition of the Mediterranean, towards a resource-efficient, low-carbon and circular economy, in alignment with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals;

Sustainable Blue Economy as a crucial driver for a smart, green and climate resilient transition in the Mediterranean

12. With 46,000 km of coastline, the Mediterranean's unique marine and coastal ecosystems are the natural backbone of blue economy, with a total value estimated at USD 5.6 trillion and which generate an annual economic value of USD 450 billion¹. Blue economy traditional and emerging sectors, ranging from fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, coastal and maritime tourism, to offshore renewable energy, blue biotechnology and desalination, offer the opportunity to further promote jobs, wellbeing, prosperity and social inclusion, where nobody is left behind;
13. Mediterranean marine and coastal resources though, are progressively exposed to increasing pollution, environmental and climate change pressures as well as to the consequences of unregulated and overexploited utilization, while they are essential allies in tackling the pollution, climate and biodiversity triple crises and in further supporting the development of blue economy, that provides benefits for current and future generations, and that contributes to the restoration, protection and maintenance of diverse, productive and climate resilient ecosystems;
14. Sustainable Blue Economy is an essential part of the solution for an accelerated transition towards a resilient and healthy Mediterranean. While many efforts have already been implemented and achievements advanced, both at policy and operational levels with national and regional perspectives, the current global and regional high-level momentum and commitment to boost sustainable development in the Mediterranean, raise the level of ambition. Progress needs to be accelerated toward achieving the Good Environmental Status and the Agenda 2030 SDGs' Targets, since the region still has sustainable development potentialities and opportunities that are unexplored, or not fully exploited yet;
15. The COP23 Portoroz Ministerial Declaration (5-8 December 2023, Portoroz, Slovenia) commits to advance decarbonization, including in the blue economy sectors, accelerate the implementation of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and enhance actions and synergies with other relevant global and regional frameworks as well as initiatives and processes, in particular UNEA and its ocean-related resolutions, relevant IMO conventions, and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), the European Green Deal the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Declarations on Sustainable Blue Economy and on Environment

¹ 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean (SoED, Plan Bleu/RAC)

and Climate Action, the WestMED Initiative Ministerial Declaration, to maximize the effective implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols;

16. The Declaration of the Ministers of the Mediterranean endorsed during the Mediterranean Day of UNOC-3 (June 10, 2025), welcomes activities for integrating MSP and ICZM to ensure the development of sustainable and resilient blue economy as a vehicle for green transition, reiterates the commitment to enhance actions and synergies with relevant regional frameworks and agreements in particular the UfM, the General Fisheries Commission of the Mediterranean (GFCM), Ramoge and Pelagos, encourages the implementation of concrete initiatives and actions, such as in the context of the Plan of Action “a Mediterranean: a model sea by 2030” (PAMEx), the Blue Med Partnership, the MedFund, and the WestMED initiative, promotes the transition to a Sustainable Blue Economy in national strategies and supports the flagship initiative on sustainable blue tourism under the UNEP/MAP Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035;
17. The Objective 5 of the UNEP/MAP Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 positions Sustainable Blue Economy as a key driver of resilience and shared prosperity in the region. It promotes circular approaches in the blue economic sectors in order to ensure that sustainability integrates ecological and societal principles into economic activities and new business models, emphasizing the responsible use of natural resources, minimizing waste, and fostering regeneration. This involves sustainable practices ensuring that marine resources are utilized responsibly to protect ocean health, application of MSP to promote strong partnership between maritime sectors and public authorities with regard to the use of marine and coastal areas, promotion of innovation, public private partnerships and sustainable solutions to advance towards the objectives of a just low-carbon, circular, green and blue economy while reinforcing an integrated financial ecosystem aiming to foster the channeling of private and public capital into sustainable investments;

Boosting Governance, partnerships and stakeholders’ engagement to achieve transition from policy commitments to programmatic streamlined actions and to promote financial investments

18. The commitments of the COP23 Portoroz Ministerial Declaration, the UNOC-3 Declaration of Ministers of the Mediterranean, the recent global and regional endeavors and initiatives as well as the UNEP/MAP Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 as strategic reference framework on sustainable development led by the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), represent the optimal policy context to progress towards healthy, productive and resilient Mediterranean Sea and the achievement of GES and of the SDGs. It is now crucial to further promote regional and national cooperation that boosts multi-annual programming and action-oriented approaches and upscale best practices and successful regional and national projects, while reinforcing the ground for public and private investments;
19. Regional collaboration is a powerful mechanism for institutional capacity building, harmonization of approaches, identification and implementation of key initiatives and projects, as well as for stakeholders' engagement. Regional platforms, multilateral dialogues, and partnerships foster learning-by-doing, policy coherence and implementation, while build trust and alignment in transboundary planning and implementation efforts. The Mediterranean can be considered in a privileged situation, given the rich and extensive regional cooperation and networks on environment and sustainable development that nourish dialogue and synergies;
20. The enhanced implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols remains crucial; in parallel, Mediterranean governance and partnerships can relay on well-established initiatives and cooperation frameworks that act as engines and platforms of sustainable and green development: the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, the Working Group of UNEP/MAP on Marine Spatial Planning, the Working Group of UfM on Sustainable Blue Economy, the WestMed initiative to support the Sustainable Blue Economy in the Western Mediterranean, the Plan of Action for a Model Mediterranean Sea (PAMEx) and its Local Investment Finance

Facility (PLIFF), the Blue Mediterranean Partnership, as well as the Monaco Blue Initiative and the Blue Economy and Finance Forum, etc.;

21. The Mediterranean Strategy on Sustainable Development 2026-2035 promotes an improved governance at all levels, ensuring the involvement of multi-level and cross sector stakeholders in promoting and achieving sustainable development at the regional, national and local level, including a reinforced awareness and capacities of local authorities as well as a strengthen coordination at the regional level among sustainable development actors, initiatives and frameworks. The Strategy includes twenty flagship initiatives covering all its objectives and already involving more than 70 partners;
22. For change to happen, actions, initiatives and projects need to be supported by appropriate integrated financial means. To this end, the recognition of Sustainable Blue Economy as a key shared investment opportunity needs to go hand in hand with the development of sustainable finance networks, national and regional, connecting and supporting financial institutions, governments, private sector, academia and NGOs, to foster cross-border collaboration and to accelerate sustainable investment. Sustainable finance and related public and private economic policies and tools are cross-cutting enablers of Sustainable Blue Economy, supporting the necessary transition of the region towards healthier development paths;

Following the above considerations, the Contracting Parties' interventions during the COP 24 Ministerial Session may be articulated around the following themes:

- **How to promote a prosperous Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean that is climate resilient, circular and grounded on ecosystem-approach, Marine Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management, which are at the heart of the MAP/Barcelona Convention System?**
- **How to identify the potential of and leverage nature-based solutions to promote a Sustainable Blue Economy that also maximizes the efforts towards climate change adaptation and mitigation?**
Which are nature-based solutions best practices and lessons learned that can be shared and promoted for broader implementation and scale up?
- **What is needed in order to enhance the capacities at all levels of public institutions and other multilevel stakeholders to absorb and tap into the existing and new international finance mechanisms and opportunities to boost Sustainable Blue Economy?**
- **How to capitalize the added value of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 as unique leading regional framework for sustainable development, including the uptake and implementation of its flagship initiatives at national and regional level, also considering the large number of involved actors and stakeholders for their implementation?**