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Meeting of the MAP Focal Points

Athens, Greece, 16-19 September 2025

Agenda Items 3 and 4: Progress Report on Activities Carried Out during the 2024-2025 Biennium and Financial Implementation Report for 2022-2023 and 2024-2025

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

General Status of the Progress in the Implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols: Analysis of the Information Mentioned in the National Reports for the 2022-2023 Biennium

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UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2025

Note by the Secretariat

1. According to Article 18 (2) of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), it shall be the function of the meetings of the Contracting Parties to keep under review the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and, in particular to consider the reports submitted by the Contracting Parties under Article 26. Under Article 26 of the Barcelona Convention, the Contracting Parties shall transmit to the Organization reports on: (a) the legal, administrative and other measures taken by them for the implementation of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols and the recommendations adopted by their meetings, and (b) the effectiveness of the measures so taken, and problems encountered in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.
2. By submitting their national implementation reports, Contracting Parties not only meet their reporting obligations pursuant to Article 26 of the Barcelona Convention and relevant articles of its Protocols. They also provide to the meetings of the Contracting Parties an essential tool for keeping the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols under review.
3. In its Decision IG.23/1, the 20th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 20) (Tirana, Albania, 17-20 December 2017) requested the Secretariat to submit to each meeting of the Contracting Parties, on the basis of an analysis of the information contained in the national reports, a report on the general advances made in the region, including at the legal and institutional levels, in implementing the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols along with proposals for further measures, as necessary.
4. The present general status report was prepared based on the Assessment of the Progress in the Implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols through an Analysis of the Information Mentioned in the National Reports for the 2022-2023 Biennium, to be presented in the Meeting of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) Focal Points (Athens, Greece, 16-19 September 2025) and for possible transmission to the 24th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Cairo, Egypt 2-5 December 2025).
5. The 16th Meeting of the Compliance Committee (Teleconference, 16-18 June 2020) concluded as below following the testing of the criteria of submission, timeliness, completeness and implementation against a set of 2016-2017 national implementation reports (document UNEP/MED CC.16/13, §20):
 - (a) agreed for the criteria of completeness to set a threshold of over 80% of responses provided for considering a national implementation report as complete, though a 100% of completeness is the target for Contracting Parties,
 - (b) agreed on the criteria of submission, timeliness, completeness and implementation to be applied by the Secretariat together with MAP Components for the 2022-2023 national implementation reports in preparation for the 21st Compliance Committee Meeting, and
 - (c) asked the Secretariat to explore the classification of Contracting Parties' performance on the basis of the following categories: (i) complete report submitted on time, (ii) complete report submitted late, (iii) incomplete report submitted on time, (iv) incomplete report submitted late and (v) not reported.
6. At the request of the 20th meeting of the Compliance Committee (Athens, Greece, 19-20 June 2024), the above criteria were tested against the national implementation reports for the biennium 2022-2023, submitted by Contracting Parties through the Barcelona Convention Reporting System (BCRS) by 7 March 2025. Accordingly, a preliminary assessment of Contracting Parties' performance was conducted.
7. In accordance with Decision IG.26/1 on "*Compliance and Reporting*" from COP 23 (Portorož, Slovenia, December 5-8, 2023), the Secretariat communicated with Contracting Parties via letters from the UNEP/MAP Coordinator (dated January 30 and October 23, 2024) and the Compliance Committee Chairperson (dated November 28, 2024). These communications requested the submission of national implementation reports for 2022-2023 by December 2024 (as per practice) and urged the immediate submission of outstanding reports from previous periods by April 2, 2024.

8. The present document is a living document, as Contracting Parties continue working towards completing the submission of their 2022-2023 national implementation reports in preparation of the overall assessment of the status of implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, to be submitted to COP24.

9. This report is prepared in cooperation with MAP components through the Reporting Implementation Task Force and incorporates statistics and analysis assessing reporting rates, timelines, completeness, and rate of implementation.

2022-2023 National Implementation Reports: Submission, Timeliness, Completeness and Implementation

Methodology applied

1. Submission. This criterium seeks to determine whether Contracting Parties have submitted their national implementation reports for the concerned legal instrument as per article 26 of the Barcelona Convention.

2. Timeliness. This criterium seeks to determine whether Contracting Parties have submitted their national implementation reports for the concerned legal instrument not later than six months after the agreed deadline for submission by COP.

2022-2023 national implementation reports submitted within the period from December 2023 to March 2025 are considered as submitted “on time”. using the online BCRS.

3. Completeness: This criterium seeks to determine whether Contracting Parties have answered the questions of the reporting format covering the legal, institutional and policy measures for the concerned legal instrument. The answer to the question on status, which requires to tick the box that applies (i.e. “yes”, “no”, “under development” or “not applicable”), was reviewed. Should the box be ticked, the response was considered as complete. Should 80 per cent or over out the total number of questions be considered as complete, for the purpose of completeness the status would be “report complete”. Otherwise, “report incomplete”.

4. Implementation: This criterium seeks to determine whether Contracting Parties have put in place the necessary legal, administrative or policy measures as well as the corresponding institutional structures to implement the concerned legal instrument. The answers to the question on status (i.e. “yes”, “no”, “under development” or “not applicable”) were reviewed. Should a report contain “yes” and/or “not applicable” responses 50 per cent or over out the total number of questions, the status as to the concerned legal instrument was considered as “implemented”. Otherwise, “not implemented”.

5. The criteria of submission, timeliness, completeness and implementation have been tested by using the BCRS to apply the criteria described above against the questions of the reporting formats covering the legal, institutional and policy measures for the concerned legal instrument. This methodology is based on the close-ended questions around which reporting formats for the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (Dumping, Prevention and Emergency, Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS), Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity (SPA/BD), Offshore and Hazardous Wastes Protocols) are structured (Decision IG.23/1). It should be noted that the reporting format of the ICZM Protocol is entirely structured around open-ended questions (Decision IG. 22/16), which has limited the testing as per the explained methodology to the criteria of submission and timelines.

Preliminary observations

6. The following preliminary observations can be drawn based on the general results of the testing criteria **as on 9 July 2025**:

(a) The reporting rate for submission corresponding to the biennium 2022-2023 varies across the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, ranging from 45% (10 reporting Parties out of 22) for the Barcelona Convention to 18 % (4 reporting Parties out of 22) for the Offshore Protocol;

(b) The reporting rate for completeness and timelines corresponding to the biennium 2022-2023 across the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols is high, with rates per legal instrument ranging from 100% for the Hazardous Wastes, LBS and Prevention & Emergency Protocols to 41% for the Dumping Protocol (9 out of 22 reporting Parties);

(c) The reporting rate for implementation corresponding to the biennium 2022-2023 varies across the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, ranging from 70% (7 reporting Parties out of 10) for the SPA/BD Protocol to 100% for the Barcelona Convention, and the Offshore and the Prevention & Emergency Protocols (respectively 22 out 22, 4 out 4, and 8 out 8 reporting Parties);

(d) Difficulties are grouped in the national implementation reports as follows: policy framework, regulatory framework, financial resources, administrative management and technical capabilities. Difficulties reported in implementing the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols for the biennium 2022-2023 cover the whole range of difficulties listed, in particular regulatory framework, financial resources and administrative management. In assessing the difficulties reported, legislative challenges are understood to include for instance issues such as absence of an adequate legal and institutional framework or limited staff trained in the implementation and enforcement legislation. Financial barriers are interpreted as pointing at limited financial resources to undertake work for the drafting of the necessary legal and regulatory framework putting in place the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. As to administrative management difficulties, these are read for example as fragmentation of roles and responsibilities amongst government ministries, departments and agencies or central, regional and local authorities making challenging the collection of information from entities;

(e) The criteria offer a screening tool first to identify the Parties to whom follow-up should be addressed as a matter of priority and second to discuss with the Parties concerned the way forward; and

(f) Based on the criteria, a baseline can be set for each legal instrument against which to measure progress on reporting and its quality and recommend associated targets per biennia. The criteria would also allow to present information on reporting in a more focused and reader-friendly way, thus facilitating Parties to identify the areas of highest priority for action and raising the profile of national reporting.

7. The Secretariat would like to also bring to the attention of the MAP Focal Points, and seek guidance and advice, on ways and means for effectively supporting the Contracting Parties in ensuring and maximizing compliance concerning the following important issues:

a) A number of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) currently lack developed management plans. However, Decision IG.26/5 (Portorož, Slovenia, 5-8 December 2023) addressed this in the context of preparing a Mid-term assessment of the implementation of post-SAP BIO (2020).

b) Data reporting on the implementation of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) at the national level has been implemented which yielded to the preparation of the Quality Status Report (QSR) report. However, there is still more work needed to focus on these efforts and to increase the efficiency of data collection at national level.