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Action Plan**
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Thematic Ad-hoc Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)

Istanbul, Türkiye, 12-13 February 2025

Agenda item 4: Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period

Reports of the meetings of the extended Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development

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Preface

1. Following the decisions of the 20th Meeting of the MCSD to establish an extended Steering Committee of the MCSD (MCSD SC) under the French leadership and with limited specific tasks linked to the preparation of the MCSD contribution to the COP 23 and to the support the MSSD revision process, five extended MCSD SC took place, respectively on 30 October 2023, 4 December 2023, 21 February 2024, 12 November 2024 and 20 December 2024.

2. In particular the extended MCSD SC meetings of 12 November 2024 and 20 December 2025 have discussed the MSSD Final evaluation, MSSD revision and the draft concept notes of the new flagship initiatives.

3. The reports of the second, third, fourth and fifth extended MCSD SC meetings are enclosed to this Information document. In addition, the summary of the comments provided in written by the extended MCSD SC after the meeting of 12 November 2024 are included to this Information document as Annex I.

Report of the meeting of the extended Steering Committee of the MCSD 4 December 2023, in Portorož, Slovenia

Background

The meeting of the extended Steering Committee of the MCSD has been organized in order to advance on the technical discussion on new Flagship initiatives as well as on youth involvement, profiting of the presence of some MCSD SC Members and Observers at the COP23.

The main outcomes of the meeting of the extended Steering Committee of the MCSD will feed the preparation and work of next extended MCSD SC meeting, planned to take place on line in February 2024, which will equally discuss the process for the review and preparation of the revised MSSD, and provide some initial feedback on the substance, with the support of an expert.

Agenda points

1. Presentation of the new Flagship initiative on Tourism
2. Discussion on the Flagship initiative on Posidonia (to be presented at the CoP23)
3. Ways and means of sharing the MSSD revision process with the Youth and discuss their potential involvement
4. Any other matters that the members wish to discuss
5. Presentation of the new UNEP/MAP Officer responsible for the MCSD

1. Presentation of the new Flagship initiative on Tourism

The initiative was presented by Jeremie Fosse from ECOUNION (Annex 1).

The draft is well received by the informal SC and considered as an excellent initiative and to be linked with MSSD revision as well as with the key initiatives and projects implemented by other institutions/actors in the region.

In particular, it is important to develop concrete linkages and cooperation with a) the WestMed initiative for sustainable blue economy¹ and its June 2023 Ministerial Declaration² which explicitly calls for reinforcement of the collaboration with UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention and its Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), b) with the two governance projects on sustainable tourism mission of the INTERREG EURO MED Programme and with c) BlueMissionMed and its priority on Tourism.

Professor Scoullos from MIO-ECSDE highlighted the importance to foresee also actions tackling the use of plastics in the hotels and suggested to plan cooperation with the WES initiative, while involving the pilots of MIO-ECSDE.

Proposed next step: ECOUNION and IDDRI will update the Flagship initiative with all input of the informal SC and will propose a meeting specifically dedicated to this flagship in early 2024.

2. Discussion on the Flagship initiative on Posidonia (to be presented to the CoP23)

The proposal, already presented during the online extended SC meeting of the MCSD (Annex 2), is well received and a strong will to support it has been confirmed.

Proposed next step: for next online extended MCSD SC - planned in February 2024, the UNEP/MAP Secretariat and the MCSD Chair will elaborate a revised concept of the Flagship initiative that better reflects the MSSD flagship initiatives framework.

In addition, it is suggested to:

¹ [Home - WestMED \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

² [WestMED-2023-Revised-Ministerial-Declaration-Final-Draft.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

- Develop a framework/methodology on how the MSSD flagship initiatives are reported and their impact assessed, linked to the MSSD Dashboard indicators;
- Once validated by the MCSD SC, publish on the UNEP/MAP website the new flagship initiatives, in order to facilitate the information sharing with the stakeholders, including civil society and youth.

3. Ways and means of sharing the MSSD revision process with the Youth and discuss their potential involvement

The Med Youth proposal is presented by Fares Shmayssani, on behalf also of Agness Nohra and Mohamed Fathy (Annex 3).

The proposal is well received by the informal SC of the MCSD with the recommendation to:

- Capitalize on the existing numerous initiatives/networks and groups of youth already existing and involved on sustainability priorities in the Mediterranean;
- Link this initiative with the MSSD flagship initiative Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD).

Proposed next step:

- Prepare the list of contacts and initiatives/networks in the Mediterranean countries and at regional level, that could be reached out for cooperation purposes;
- Elaborate the questionnaire to identify what Youth see their future, and with reference to the MSSD priorities;
- Disseminates the questionnaire to the identified list of contacts and initiatives/networks to capture the results and prepare a report to the MCSD SC;
- Organize a short webinar to present to the youth the UNEP/MAP, MSSD and its MCSD the MED2050 scenario for future and the flagship initiatives;
- With the support of the UNEP/MAP Secretariat and Professor Scoullas leader of the MSESD, identify how the youth involvement could be framed within the MSSD flagship initiative Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development.

4. Point not in the agenda: Proposal for the revision of the MSSD

By end of December 2023, an indicative planning will be defined in order to finalize the reviewed MSSD by June 2025 for adoption by the COP 24, in December 2025. The planning will be shared during the next extended MCSD SC meeting, planned to take place online in February 2024.

The Secretariat will launch soon the Terms of reference for the recruitment of a consultant who will support the evaluation of the MSSD.

5. Presentation of the new UNEP/MAP Officer responsible for the MCSD

Patrizia Busolini is the new UNEP/MAP Programme Officer in charge of the MSSD, since Mid-November 2023.

Report of the meeting of the extended Steering Committee of the MCSD 21 February 2024 (on-line)

1. The revision process will update the MSSD based to the extent possible on existing analysis and taking in account the main recent global and regional frameworks, including the European Green Deal
2. The MSSD revision will not open the floor to extensive changes but to an update, while aligning the Strategy with the most recent global and regional frameworks while addressing the thematic and systemic identified gaps, building on the 2021 MSSD mid-term revision
3. To this end, the evaluator, who will be soon selected, will mainly do a **desk research gap analysis**, that needs to be combined with **the outcomes/projections of the MED 2050**. It will be also based on the **updated evaluation of the indicators of the MSSD Dashboard**.
4. The evaluation of the MSSD will equally cover the implementation of the **Flagship Initiatives**
5. In principle, with regards to the MSSD revision there is already an agreed list, however new flagship Initiatives will be considered, as recommended by the MCSD CS on June 2023 in Marseille, including on youth and women leadership
6. For the time being 2-3 working groups are suggested: on **MSP/Blue economy, Circular Economy, Ocean Economy/Sustainable Finance**. **This groups will be composed by a limited number of experts from different countries**, elected on their own capacity and civil society representants
7. MAP components and MCSD members will be involved in undertaking Consultation mechanisms also for other relevant subjects, even if there is no respective dedicated working group
8. A potential working group **on climate change** is to **be decided in a second phase**, after more reflection is undertaken regarding the process for updating **UNEP/MAP 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas** and clarifying the role of MedEEC
9. A potential working group **on indicators** for the time being **remains on hold**, as the MSSD can already relay in a sound number of indicators, even though some work can be done, while new indicators need to be approved by the MCSD
10. It was agreed to strengthen in principle the systemic aspects embedded into the revised MSSD: ie science-policy interface, Ocean Economy/Sustainable Finance, strengthen the role for local authorities, streamlined cooperation with key regional initiatives and programmes
11. In terms of timeline: **by January/February 2025**, an **ad hoc MCSD meeting** will be called to discuss the revised MSSD, in view of the **MCSD meeting to be held in June 2025 that will validate the revised MSSD**.

Action Points/follow-up

- Secretariat to prepare:
 - o A letter for the MCSD Members and the MAP FPs, explaining that the MSSD revision foresees WGs for the time being (MSP/Blue economy, Circular Economy, Ocean Economy/Sustainable Finance) and that accordingly they need to appoint experts
 - o Terms of reference for the WGs
 - o Start reflecting on how to strengthen the systemic governance part of the MSSD, reinforcing and streamlining the cooperation with key regional initiatives, programmes and institutions. A first draft to be presented at the MCSD SC meeting as information document
- Plan Bleu to:
 - o Define how they **plan to utilize/include the outcomes/projections of the MED 2050** within the MSSD revision process and share the proposal with CU
 - o Provide the Coordinator with the **updated assessment of the MSSD Dashboard of current indicators**, as soon as possible

- Next **Steering Committee of the MCSD will take place in Athens on 18 and 19 April:**
 - Secretariat to prepare the agenda in coordination with the President of the MCSD
The main identified agenda points will cover: Progress report on MSSD and Flagship Initiatives in the period June 2023-April 2024; MSSD evaluation and Revision process; Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and Indicators and Related Trends; new Flagship Initiatives; Report on the work of the MED Youth Group. Specific time to be foreseen to have an atelier on gender/ women leadership.
 - Secretariat to prepare for each of the new Flagship Initiatives and in coordination with the respective identified partners, half a page on the main objectives and potential new partners.

Report of the meeting of the extended Steering Committee of the MCSD 12 November 2024 (on-line)

Main outcomes

- MSSD Evaluation process: for next evaluation exercises, consider define a baseline for the agreed actions and targets and give opportunity to as many as possible key actors to contribute to evaluation processes; therefore promote an inclusive evaluation process;
- 2016-2025 MSSD Final Evaluation: to add the 2019 Mid-Term evaluation color coding tables by Objectives/Strategic Directions, to reflect the progress to date more clearly;
- Updated MSSD Targets: Secretariat will further work on this section; Inputs from the MCSD Extended SC are more than welcomed; Secretariat to further look at the relevant commitments/targets made under the MAP system beyond 2030 as appropriate;
- MSSD Dashboard indicators: Proposals to consider possible new indicators (ie flooding, fisheries, food security, air quality);
- Agreement on selecting 10 core indicators to better communicate on main sustainability messages. Further consideration on their selection including the new ones proposed (Water withdrawal per inhabitant; Plastic leakages at sea; Air quality);
- New flagship initiatives: The Secretariat in parallel with their finalization will work to involve as many as possible countries/partners/regional initiatives for their implementation;
- Secretariat took note of the request of the Members of the Extended SC for more time to provide more concrete inputs on the proposals made.

Action Points

Extended MCSD SC members may **provide input/comments by 27 November**, to the following documents which are attached to this email:

- MSSD 2026-2025 Implementation Final evaluation
- Proposals on the section related to the Strategic Directions
- Updated MSSD Targets table
- 8 new MSSD flagship initiatives
- Possible adjustment on proposed 10 core indicators
- Possible new/adjustment to the MSSD Dashboard of 28 indicators (keeping in mind the need for relevance, data availability and the global context)

Report of the meeting of the extended Steering Committee of the MCSD 20 December 2024 (on-line)

Main outcomes

- **MSSD main changes**
 - **Proposed updated and new MSSD actions** seem pertinent.
 - The following aspects should be better reflected: **marine litter and plastic pollution; construction and demolition waste recycling; waste management** and related preventive actions to be linked not only to the urban dimension (under MSSD Obj 3), but also to private sector/circular economy (under Obj 5); **blue economy** to be better reflected in the actions; **market instruments** to support delivery of environmental targets to be considered for inclusion; **phase out environmental harmful subsidies** better embedded as approach
 - Consider **possibilities to merge some Actions**, as appropriate, to ensure balance distribution among Objectives
 - **Climate change** as 1st priority/Objective 1. Plan Bleu to take the lead to assess how the main outcomes of MedEcc reports can be used in terms of MSSD updated/new actions under Obj 4. Appropriate linkages to be developed with the other Objectives to ensure cross cutting approach. **WEFE NEXUS flagship initiative** concrete tool on climate change adaptation
 - **Reference to local authorities** to be expressly mentioned also in the Executive Summary
 - **Timeframe of actions:** to be revised
- **Indicators**
 - **Many** quantitative indicators (number of..), while it is important to have also **qualitative indicators**. Potential **reduction and review** is to be considered
 - Highlight the indicators that are relevant to more than one Strategic Direction and Action, to **facilitate linkages**
- **New Flagship initiatives**
 - Add a paragraph in the narrative on **how FIs contribute to different objectives** or/and a diagram to show integrated approach vs. silo approach
 - Develop flagship initiatives in a detailed way
- **Governance**
 - Proposed changes seem pertinent and aligned to needs
 - **New action 6.2.1** (institutional capacity of local governments/ municipalities to integrate and implement the MSSD objectives, while ensuring governance coordination with the national level): Local Authorities/Municipalities should not be considered as responsible actors but rather the national government and related policy/financial support
- **Targets**
 - **Some** more work needed with reference to **global commitments**
 - Targets must be **meaningful and measurable**, therefore narrative generic descriptions are to be avoided
 - To add target on **waste reduction under Obj 5**, linked to sustainable consumption and production
 - Link targets to indicators but also to Flagship Initiatives
 - One proposal to be considered could be to have, for each objective, **2030 and 2025 timeframe targets**

Action Points

- **Climate change:** Plan Bleu to assess how the main outcomes of MedEcc reports can be used in terms of MSSD updated/new actions under Obj 4
- **Indicators and Targets:** Secretariat to further work and based on the receive inputs
- **Governance:** comments to be provided **by Thursday 26 December**
- **ECOUNION:** to send formal request for a potential new flagship initiative. The template will be shared and it should be filled in and sent to the Secretariat **by 6 January**

Annex I: Summary of the comments provided in written by the extended MCSD SC after the meeting of 12 November 2024

Summary of the comments on the initial elements for the update of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development

1. Contents of the updated MSSD

France

As overall comment, issues as **coastal discharges and decarbonization of important economic sectors** and in connection with climate change, are not explicated enough.

It is also proposed to further consider climate COPs as well as an initiative that France will bring to the 3rd UNOC (June 2025, Nice, France) and related to the establishment of **sustainable ocean plan by 2030**, stressing the link between Ocean and climate.

Specifically, on MSSD Objectives/Strategic Directions:

- **Objective 1, Strategic direction 1.2:** full support **for the introduction of MSP** and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss
- **Objective 2, Strategic direction 2.3** (Shifted to OBJ 1): it is suggested to mention explicitly the **Mediterranean Posidonia network**, not only as flagship, as is very important as Ecosystem for carbon stock.
- **Objective 3, Strategic direction 3.4:** full support to introduce the concept of **circular economy**
It is suggested to **add another strategic direction** related to the **resorption of coastal discharges of household waste**
- **Objective 5**, important to **explicitly introduce decarbonization and transition to renewable energy** for all sector contributing to the Climate changes- especially by **decarbonization and greening the private sector of the blue economy** (shipping, tourism, fishing).

To this end **one additional action shall be added:**

- Encourage Mediterranean countries to adopt sustainable ocean plan (SOP) contributing to climate change resilience and adaptation by reducing carbon emission
- OR**
- Encourage crucial sectors of the blue economy for sustainability environmentally friendly transition and to decarbonize their activities for reducing impacts on Med Sea and climate changes

In this way it would be also easier to link the **new flagship initiative sustainable Blue Tourism** with decarbonization and greening the private sector of the blue economy.

Morocco

Focus on the **issue of water** by proposing that the new MSSD pays particular attention to the issue of **seawater desalination**, taking into account also the need to reduce its impact on the marine ecosystem.

Tunisia

In the framework of the Strategic Direction 6.4 (Objective 6, Governance) and related to the promotion of education and research for sustainable development, it is suggested to define and implement a **Mediterranean Plan for the sensibilization, communication and development of a sustainable development culture**.

Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED)

- Objective 3, to add efficient water use
- Objective 3, SD 3.4 might be rephrased as follows: *Structure waste management in an efficient manner by promoting sustainable production and consumption within the context of circular economy*
- Objective 5, additional wording ‘regenerative/circular’ is useful, but might not be necessary, as these are already included in “sustainable”.
- Objective 5, SD 5.7 ‘Ensure that adaptation to environmental impacts is possible by mobilizing public and private finance: lay the groundwork for a Mediterranean Green Taxonomy of Finances’ might be dropped, as SD 5.8 ‘Leverage public budgets as a key tool for achieving sustainability objectives by integrating environmental and climate goals into national and regional budgetary processes’, already covers the topic

UfM

The overall exercise would benefit from drilling down to the SDG Target level.

2. Indicators

France

Agrees with the concept of core indicators and the 3 new ones, however it seems the food security dimension is missing. It is suggested to capitalize indicators coming from SDGs. The implementation of the MSSD should be monitor also by different indicators, territorially or national indicators for some of them, directly related to the objectives and concrete actions.

it would be very useful to work on **specific indicators for the implementation of each Flagship initiative**.

An online working group, or bilateral contacts should be organized by Plan Bleu accordingly, with FIs leaders.

Morocco

Focus on the **issue of water** by proposing, in addition to the indicator for water abstraction, an **indicator for the availability of renewable water per inhabitant per year** (m3/Habitant/year).

This indicator will enable countries to be classified into three categories according to the availability of renewable water resources (countries affected by **water stress, water shortage or water scarcity**).

In this respect, the majority of countries in the Mediterranean region, particularly those in the south, will find themselves in one of the three situations mentioned above. To alleviate this problem, these countries will be obliged to take the necessary steps to mobilise non-conventional water sources, in particular seawater desalination.

Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED)

Water withdrawal and plastic leakages at sea are well presented. However, limiting Air quality to concentration of PM2.5 particles might not be indicative enough- how can it be refined to include selected particular gases- maybe carbon monoxide, which is heavily related to the transport sector in Southern countries. How can this be done without overlapping with the core indicators? Agreement with the remark in the concept note to try to obtain separate data for urban and rural areas, not only national averages, to be able to relate differences in air quality to specific activities, mainly traffic, industry, agriculture and power generation.

Global Water Partnership

Additional indicators suggested:

- Number of major forest fires per year or burnt areas per year
- Number of extreme events (floods per year), cost of damages or areas (km²) affected

3. Targets

Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED)

- Avoid setting new targets for 2030 and beyond without clear indication of the status of implementation of the existing targets
- Good that “oil and gas activities and seabed mining” are specifically included, but it might be necessary to have more precise targets measured according to established baseline
- Add transition away from fossil fuels by 2050 with periodic reviews
- Add targets aligned with COP 29 decisions

Summary of the comments on the draft concept notes of the new MSSD flagship initiatives

1. Mediterranean Forest Initiative (MFI)

Spain

- Spain supports the initiative
- Silvamed, as a statutory body of FAO, could play an important role, taking into account the experience of FAO in forest management and restoration in the Mediterranean region

UfM

- Very interested in working on addressing the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation
- UfM collaborates on Mediterranean Forests with FAO through a multi-stakeholder's approach and process, further reinforced at the Silva Med/Med Forestry Week Committee.

2. Mediterranean Network of Zero Net Cities

UfM

- From an energy and climate perspective, UfM is keen to explore collaboration on energy efficiency, adaptation and resilience in urban environments and sustainable investments
- There are similar initiatives already running in the region to be taken into account such as the 'Besides the EU Mission Climate-Neutral', 'Smart Cities by 2010', the 'Urban Transition Mission' <https://urbantransitionsmission.org/> as well as initiatives such as 'C40'

3. Posidonia

Spain

- Many elements in common with actions and initiatives that are being carried out at national level is very positive.
- Cautious about mentioning the creation of a specific Posidonia fund in this thematic area as a financing mechanism. It should be better explained

UfM

- Can propose some useful contacts with other ongoing med projects. MedPan does not seem to be directly involved while it is a very crucial partner on the subject matter

4. Sustainable Blue Tourism

France

- Link the new FI initiative to a potential new Strategic Direction of the MSSD related to encourage crucial sectors of the blue economy for sustainable environmentally friendly transition and to decarbonise activities for reducing impacts on Mediterranean Sea and climate changes

Spain

- The main overall objective of the initiative should be to reduce the tourism negative impacts on the environment and on natural ecosystems and biodiversity
- Suggested to include planned or potential measures that respond to water consumption and waste generation indicators as a final product of the initiative.

UfM

- Suggested to cooperate also based on other relevant regional/sub-regional projects

5. Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus (WEFE):

UfM

- Full support as one of the leading partners. An important aspect should be scaling up existing research findings and successful pilots into changemakers for the WEFE ecosystem, by promoting support and access to finance for innovative startups. A similar reflection can be done more horizontally, by strengthening the innovation/capitalization pipeline from applied research to market. A horizontal aspect be the inclusion of relevant green skills in connected academic curricula.

6. Coast Day as a UN International Observance:

UfM

- Interested in supporting this initiative from a climate perspective, potentially in coordination with efforts with key partners such as ECMWF-Copernicus for cultural heritage protection.

7. Med Youth Group

UfM

- Very much in line with the UfM publication Increasing Youth Involvement in Multistakeholder Dialogue: Youth-Responsive implementation of the UfM Youth Agenda”, a methodology that can be also potentially applied to the Med Youth Group
- Interested in integrating this important topic into the broader global climate agenda, particularly at events such as UNFCCC COPs

8. Med Women leadership 4 SDGs

Spain

- Better highlight the initiative contributes to all MSSD objective
- Consider other relevant initiatives at global level and link the initiative to the other MSSD FI on the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development
- Some additional activities suggested and related to a task force or Gender Committee and in mutual learning from civil society initiatives
- Additional partners suggested

UfM

- Overall connections with UfM activities related to gender would be established, whenever relevant
- Interested in integrating this important topic into the broader global climate agenda, particularly at events such as UNFCCC COPs
- Some specific elements related to planned activities to be reinforced
- On the proposed partners, it would be advisable to include other relevant actors specialized in gender and climate issues