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12th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group

Athens, Greece, 15 September 2025

Agenda Item 5: Main Elements of the draft Decision on the Ecosystem Approach to COP 24

Elements for a Draft Decision on the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Policy and Roadmap 2026-2035 and Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme for the Mediterranean Sea and Coast (IMAP), from the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group to the MAP Focal Points

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UNEP/MAP
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Note by the Secretariat

This document builds entirely on Working Documents UNEP/MED WG.630/3 and UNEP/MED WG.630/4 prepared for the 12th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (EcAp CG) (Athens, Greece, 15 September 2025)

The purpose is to provide elements to the 12th Meeting of EcAp CG, to develop the proposed Draft Decision on EcAp Policy and Roadmap 2026-2035 for COP24 (2-5 December 2025), through the Meeting of the MAP Focal Points (16-19 September 2025).

This documents includes:

- a) Elements for a Draft Decision reflecting on the preambular and operative section of the Decision;
- b) The layout of 2 Annexes and related appendices.

Annex I and its 5 appendices will include the content of the approved version of Working Document UNEP/MED WG.630/3, whereas Annex II will include the content of the approved version of Working Document UNEP/MED WG.630/4.

With the closure of the 12th Meeting of EcAp CG, an in-session document will be distributed to the Meeting of the MAP Focal Points, which will include the full, consolidated version of Draft Decision IG. 27/6 and its 2 annexes as described above.

The present document is submitted for review and consideration of the 12th Meeting of EcAp and subsequent submission to the Meeting of the MAP Focal Points (Athens, Greece, 16-19 September 2025).

Part 1: Conclusions and Recommendations of the 12th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group

[to be completed and submitted during the adoption session of the Meeting. This section will include some conclusions of the Meeting as well as a proposed draft decision to COP 24 based on the elements described in part 2 of the Document and Meeting deliberations as appropriate].

Part 2: Elements for a Draft Decision on the Upgraded Ecosystem Approach and Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme for the Mediterranean Sea and Coast, from the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group to the MAP Focal Points

1. Based on the Agenda of the 12th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (EcAp CG) (Athens, Greece, 15 September 2025), and pending final outcome of its discussion, as well as the approach used for the preparation of the draft Decisions, the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group meeting may consider the following elements for inclusion in a draft Decision related to upgrading the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Policy, Roadmap, and the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme for the Mediterranean Sea Coast:

a) In the preambular part of the draft Decision:

- Welcomes the outcome document of the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC-3) entitled “Our ocean, our future: united for urgent action”, reaffirming the strong global commitment to conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas and marine resources and reconfirming the need to strengthen the role of regional seas conventions and action plans;
- Is inspired by the high-level celebration of the anniversary of the 50 years of the UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan and the 30 years of the Post-Rio Barcelona Convention, in UNOC-3, on 10 June 2025, as a strong sign of renewed commitment of the Contracting Parties, as reflected in their Ministerial Declaration;
- Recalls the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 67/296 of July 2022, entitled “Our Ocean, Our future, Our responsibility”;
- Refers to the United Nations Environment Assembly Resolutions 6/15 of March 2024, on strengthening ocean efforts to address climate change, marine biodiversity loss, and pollution, which underscores the need to implement regional seas conventions, protocols, and action plans for the protection and conservation of the marine and coastal environment; Resolution 3/10 of December 2017, on addressing water pollution in inland, coastal, and marine ecosystems to protect and restore water-related ecosystems, as well as the related Action Plan for its implementation; Resolution 5/8 of March 2021, on establishing a science-policy panel to provide countries with independent, policy-relevant scientific advice on chemicals, waste, and pollution prevention; Resolution 5/14 of March 2022, which set the basis for the process on developing an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution;
- Recalls the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and the respective provisions for enhancing EcAp Policy and Roadmap implementation;
- Recalls further the EcAp-related Decisions IG.17/6 of COP 15 (Almeria, Spain, 2008); IG.20/4 of COP 17 (Paris, France, 2012); IG.21/3 of COP 18 (Istanbul, Türkiye, 2013); and IG.25/3 of COP 22 (Antalya, Türkiye, 2021);
- Recalls also the IMAP- and MED QSR-related Decisions IG.22/7 of COP 19 (Athens, Greece, 2016); IG.23/6 of COP 20 (Tirana, Albania, 2017); IG.24/4 of COP 21 (Naples, Italy, 2019); IG.25/10 of COP 22 (Antalya, Türkiye, 2021); and IG.26/3 of COP 23 (Portorož, Slovenia, 2023);
- Considers the findings and policy recommendation of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report including its Executive Summary and Summary for Policy Makers, as well as the work guided by the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMONs) and the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group Meetings;

- Appreciates the work conducted by the Contracting Parties to establish and make operational national IMAP-based monitoring programmes for the IMAP Ecological Objectives and respective Common Indicators, including data generation,
- Considers the developments within the European Union (EU) Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), including its assessment as well as of the Programmes of Measures (PoMs), as an important mechanism to support EcAp implementation,
- Considers the developments within the Regional Seas Conventions on the monitoring and assessment of marine environment,

b) In the operative paragraphs of the draft Decision:

- Approves the Ecological Vision for the Mediterranean Sea and Coast;
- Agrees to apply EcAp Strategic Goals for the Mediterranean 2026-2035;
- Adopts the MAP EcAp Policy and Roadmap 2026-2035, including its 6 implementation steps, ecological objective, operational objectives, indicators, GES definitions and targets, timeline, and governance structure for guiding EcAp implementation;
- Reaffirms the EcAp governance structure through Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group Meeting (EcAp CG), Correspondence Groups on monitoring (CORMONs), Correspondence Group on Economic and Social Analysis (COR ESA) and ad-hoc Online Working Groups (OWG), and adopts the Terms of References and flow of interaction;
- Requests the Contracting Parties to ensure full implementation of EcAp as the primary drive to progress towards a healthy, clean, sustainable and climate resilient Mediterranean Sea and Coast, and to achieve GES, noting that in case of any discrepancy, the terms and contents of this decision override those of all other decisions;
- Invites the Contracting Parties to provide the necessary financial and institutional support for the effective implementation of the NAPs/PoMs', as well as for the monitoring and assessment of marine and coastal environment;
- Encourages partners, competent organizations, scientific community, citizens and private sector to fully consider the vision, strategic goals and other elements of EcAp Policy and Roadmap, strengthen their work to ensure continued efforts for its implementation;
- Adopts the third cycle of IMAP based on an 8-year cycle, and approves the assessment criteria while noting their evolving nature based on quality-assured data availability and progress towards Good Environmental Status (GES);
- Request the Contracting Parties to streamline IMAP implementation, in line with their national specificities;
- Promotes Science-Policy Interface to enhance evidenced-based policy making;
- Takes into account the differences in the monitoring capacities of the Contracting Parties and the need to further enhance capacity building and technical assistance for implementation;
- Invites the Contracting Parties, with the support of the Secretariat, to update their national monitoring programmes in light of the updated elements of IMAP and to report regularly quality-assured data;
- Encourages the Contracting Parties, with the support of the Secretariat, to undertake joint monitoring initiatives, exchange best practices, use harmonized monitoring and assessment methodologies, ensure cost efficiency, and apply the region-wide agreed assessment criteria under IMAP;
- Invites the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Contracting Parties, to engage with relevant international financing institutions, regional and international organizations, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders to identify and pursue opportunities for mobilizing financial resources in support of the implementation of the updated NAPs/PoMs and enhanced national capacities for IMAP implementation;
- Urges the Contracting Parties to implement the NAPs/PoMs and accelerate progress towards achieving GES in the Mediterranean, enhance coherence with other national policies and strategies, and regularly report on their implementation pursuant to Article 13 of the LBS

Protocol, while securing enabling conditions for their long-term sustainability within the broader context of global efforts to address the combined threats of the triple planetary crisis - climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution - and the regional commitment to implement the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development for the period 2026-2035, as a strategic regional cooperation framework to upscale sustainable and climate resilient development pathways;

- Invites partners, as well as regional and international organizations to support IMAP and NAPs/PoMs implementation, and use all available means, mechanisms and facilities to contribute to achieving GES in the Mediterranean;
- Requests the Secretariat to allocate adequate financial resources in line with the Programme of Work to support the Contracting Parties for the implementation of the updated IMAP-based national monitoring programmes;
- Requests the Secretariat to upgrade the IMAP InfoSystem not only to serve as a data repository but also to generate assessment products, and the Contracting Parties to effectively and timely submit IMAP generated data in line with the monitoring frequency of the respective Common Indicators, as indicated in the respective Indicator Guidance Factsheets.

2. This Draft Decision will include the following Annexes and related Appendices:

- Annex I: EcAp Policy and Roadmap (2026 – 2035):
 - Appendix 1: List of Ecological Objectives, Common Indicators, GES Definitions Proposed Targets;
 - Appendix 2: Timeline for EcAp Roadmap and Policy Implementation (2026 – 2035);
 - Appendix 3: Specific measures and timeline for their implementation in the framework of the legally-binding Regional Plans and Post-2020 SAPBIO, adopted in the framework of UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention System;
 - Appendix 4: Possible Products and Interaction between EcAp Governance Bodies;
 - Appendix 5: Terms of reference (TORs) for Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMONs), Economic and social analysis (COR ESA) and Online Working Groups (OWGs).
- Annex II: Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme for the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) (Third Cycle).