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Joint Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Pollution and Marine Litter Monitoring

Anavyssos, Greece, 27 -28 May 2025

Agenda Item 3: IMAP Update
b. IMAP Pollution Ecological Objectives and Indicators

IMAP update for Ecological Objectives 5, 9 and 11

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Note by the Secretariat

In line with Decision IG.26/14 on the Programme of Work and Budget for 2024–2025 (COP 23, 2023), and specifically to the mandate with regards to EcAP Roadmap and IMAP revision, the Secretariat and its MED POL Programme conducted preliminary work and prepared a draft proposal to update the Operational Objectives, IMAP Common Indicators, Good Environmental Status (GES) definitions, and Targets for Ecological Objectives 5 (Eutrophication) and 9 (Pollution). This proposal was presented at the online meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Pollution Monitoring (CorMon Pollution) held on 30 January 2025. The meeting agreed to establish an Online Working Group which, as also reflected in the report of the Meeting (WG.602/4) concluded Annex I of the working document WG.602/3, for submission to the MED POL Focal Point meeting in June 2025.

After a careful review of the agreed document by the Online Working Group, the Secretariat is of the view that this document may require some minor adjustments to fully reflect the relevant Decisions taken in this respect with regards to some GES targets. To this aim the present document replaces the previous document UNEP/MED WG.626/3 that was disseminated and proposes a disaggregated approach for GES target different from the approach followed for the other EcAp and IMAP clusters.

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1. Implementation of Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme Ecological Objectives 5 and 9

1. The Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Pollution Monitoring (CorMon Pollution), held online on 30 January 2025, agreed to maintain the structure of the 5th Ecological Objective (EO 5) on Eutrophication and the 9th Ecological Objective (EO 9) on Contaminants, as originally established in Decision IG.20/4 “*Implementing MAP ecosystem approach roadmap: Mediterranean Ecological and Operational Objectives, Indicators and Timetable for implementing the ecosystem approach roadmap*”, and Decision IG.22/7: “*Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria*” (COP 19, 2016), and aligned with the earlier framework set out in Decision IG.21/3: “*Ecosystem Approach including adopting definitions of Good Environmental Status (GES) and Targets*” (COP 18, 2013).

2. This ~~decision~~conclusion involves retaining the following list of IMAP Common Indicators related to Ecological Objective 5 (EO 5).

Common Indicator 13: Concentration of key nutrients in water column (EO5);

Common Indicator 14: Chlorophyll-a concentration in water column (EO5).

○ This ~~conclusion~~decision also involves retaining the following list of IMAP Common Indicators related to Ecological Objective 9 (EO 9).

Common Indicator 17: Concentration of key harmful contaminants measured in the relevant matrix (EO9, related to biota, sediment, seawater);

Common Indicator 18: Level of pollution effects of key contaminants where a cause-and-effect relationship has been established (EO9);

Common Indicator 19: Occurrence, origin (where possible), extent of acute pollution events (e.g. slicks from oil, oil products and hazardous substances), and their impact on biota affected by this pollution (EO9);

Common Indicator 20: Actual levels of contaminants that have been detected and number of contaminants which have exceeded maximum regulatory levels in commonly consumed seafood (EO9);

Common Indicator 21: Percentage of intestinal enterococci concentration measurements within established standards (EO9).

3. This document also presents Operational Objectives, IMAP Common Indicators, and GES Definitions for Ecological Objectives 5 and 9, as established by Decisions IG.20/4, Decision IG.22/7 and Decision IG.21/3. This follows the conclusion of the CorMon Pollution Meeting held on 30 January 2025, which decided not to introduce any changes.

4. Although the CorMon Pollution Meeting held on 30 January 2025 concluded to retain the targets as originally approved by Decision IG.21/3 on the Ecosystem Approach, including definitions of Good Environmental Status (GES) and targets, the present document introduces minor revisions to several targets associated with IMAP Common Indicators 13, 14, 17, ~~20~~19, and 21, as shown in Table 1 below.

5. These revisions are necessary to ensure consistency between the proposals presented to and approved by the CorMon Pollution Meeting and the ongoing IMAP Pollution revision process, including the revision of the IMAP Guidance Factsheet presented in meeting document UNEP/MED WG.626/4.

6. The ~~is~~ consistency is necessary to ensure full compatibility between the elements proposed for the IMAP revision and those intended for integration into the Decision on the updated Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) implementation for 2026–2035. This decision is aimed for submission to the 24th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 24) to the Barcelona Convention, scheduled for December 2025.

7. The proposed revised targets are ~~fully~~ aligned with the GES/non-GES classification approved and applied in the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR

2. Implementation of Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme Ecological Objective 11

8. Further to decision of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Pollution Monitoring (30 January, 2025), to maintain the structure of the 5th Ecological Objective (EO 5) on Eutrophication and the 9th Ecological Objective (EO 9) on Contaminants, the present document also proposes to maintain the structure of the 11th Ecological Objective (EO 11) on Energy including underwater noise as originally established in Decision IG.20/4 “*Implementing MAP ecosystem approach roadmap: Mediterranean Ecological and Operational Objectives, Indicators and Timetable for implementing the ecosystem approach roadmap*”, and Decision IG.22/7 : “*Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria*” (COP 19, 2016).

Candidate Common Indicator 26: Proportion of days and geographical distribution where loud, low, and mid-frequency impulsive sounds exceed levels that are likely to entail significant impact on marine animals;

Candidate Common Indicator 27: Levels of continuous low frequency sounds with the use of models as appropriate

9. In addition, Table 2 below presents the proposed definitions of Good Environmental Status (GES) and associated targets for IMAP Candidate ~~Common~~ Indicators 26 and 27. These definitions were initially outlined in the Guidance Factsheets acknowledged by the 2019 MED POL Focal Points and have since been revised as part of the ongoing IMAP revision process as detailed in meeting document UNEP/MED WG. 626/5.

10. The proposed revised targets are ~~fully~~ aligned with the GES/non-GES classification approved and applied in the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR.

11. This document also proposes that the current CorMon Pollution Meeting endorses the elevation of IMAP Candidate Common Indicators 26 and 27 to IMAP Common Indicators. This recommendation is grounded in the significant progress achieved in underwater noise assessment, culminating in the ~~comprehensive~~ noise assessment featured in the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR). This advancement builds upon the foundational framework established in the Guidance Factsheet endorsed by the 2019 Meeting of MED POL Focal Points for further elaboration to incorporate evolving scientific knowledge, and the subsequent upgrade as presented in meeting document UNEP/MED WG.626/5.

Table 1: Operational Objectives, IMAP Common Indicators, GES Definitions and Revised Targets for Ecological Objectives 5 and 9.

Ecological Objective 5 (EO5):		Eutrophication Human-induced eutrophication is prevented, especially adverse effects thereof, such as losses in biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, harmful algal blooms and oxygen deficiency in bottom waters	
Operational Objective	Indicator	GES	Proposed Revised Targets
5.1 Human introduction of nutrients in the marine environment is not conducive to eutrophication	5.1.1 Concentration of key nutrients in the water column (IMAP Common Indicator 13)	Concentrations of nutrients in the euphotic layer are in line with prevailing physiographic, geographic and climate conditions	State: - Reference nutrients concentrations according to the local hydrological, chemical, and morphological characteristics of the un- impacted marine region. - Decreasing trend of nutrients concentrations in water column of human impacted areas; statistically defined, considering the boundary limit between GES and non-GES classes of the assessment scales. Pressure: - Reduction of BOD emissions from land-based sources. - Reduction of nutrients emissions from land-based sources.
5.2 Direct and indirect effects of nutrient over- enrichment are prevented	5.2.1 Chlorophyll-a concentration in the water column (IMAP Common Indicator 14)	Natural levels of algal biomass, water transparency and oxygen concentrations in line with prevailing physiographic, geographic, and weather conditions	State: - Chlorophyll a concentration in high-risk areas below the boundary limit between GES and non-GES classes of the assessment scales. - Decreasing trend in Chl-a concentrations in high-risk areas affected by human activities. - Index of turbidity behind threshold in high-risk areas¹. - Increasing trend of transparency in areas impacted by human activities^{2,3}. - Dissolved oxygen concentrations in high-risk areas above local threshold³. - Increasing trend in dissolved oxygen concentrations in areas impacted by human activities⁴.

¹ Transferred from Indicator 5.2.2, [Decision IG. 21/3, Annex I](#)
² [ibidem](#)
³ Transferred from Indicator 5.2.3.1, [Decision IG. 21/3, Annex I](#)
⁴ [ibidem](#)

Ecological Objective 9 (EO9): Contaminants cause no significant impact on coastal and marine ecosystems and human health			
Operational Objective	Indicator	GES	Proposed Revised Targets
9.1 Concentration of priority contaminants is kept within acceptable limits and does not increase	9.1.1 Concentration of key harmful contaminants measured in the relevant matrix <u>(IMAP Common Indicator 17)</u>	Level of pollution is below a determined threshold defined for the area and species.	State: - Concentrations of specific contaminants below either <u>the boundary limit between GES and non-GES classes of the assessment scales</u> Background Assessment Criteria or Environmental Assessment Criteria (BACs/EACs) or below reference concentrations (from other sources). - No deterioration trends in contaminants concentrations in sediment and biota from human impacted areas, statistically defined. Pressure: - Reduction of contaminants emissions from land-based sources.
9.2 Effects of released contaminants are minimized	9.2.1 Level of pollution effects of key contaminants where a cause-and-effect relationship has been established <u>(Common Indicator 18)</u>	Concentrations of contaminants are not giving rise to acute pollution events	State: - Contaminants effects below thresholds. - Decreasing trend in the operational releases of oil and other contaminants from coastal, maritime and offshore activities
9.3 Acute pollution events are prevented, and their impacts are minimized	9.3.1 Occurrence, origin (where possible), and extent of acute pollution events (e.g. slicks from oil, oil products and hazardous substances) and their impact on biota affected by this pollution <u>(Common Indicator 19)</u>	Occurrence of acute pollution events are reduced to the minimum.	Pressure: Decreasing Decreasing trend in the occurrences of acute pollution events. - Achieve the elimination of intentional pollution of the marine environment by oil and other harmful and noxious substances (HNS) and the minimization of accidental discharge of such substances.

9.4 Levels of known harmful contaminants in major types of seafood do not exceed established standards.	9.4.1 Actual levels of contaminants that have been detected and number of contaminants which have exceeded maximum regulatory levels in commonly consumed seafood (<u>Common Indicator 20</u>)	Concentrations of contaminants are within the regulatory limits for consumption by humans.	State: - Concentrations of contaminants <u>in foodstuffs</u> are <u>below the UNEP/MAP Environmental Assessment Criteria approved by legislation for the protection of human health, within the regulatory limits set.</u> - Decreasing trend in the frequency of cases of seafood samples above <u>the approved UNEP/MAP Environmental Assessment Criteria regulatory limits for contaminants.</u>
9.5 Water quality in bathing waters and other recreational areas does not undermine human health	9.5.1 Percentage of intestinal enterococci concentration measurements within established standards (<u>IMAP Common Indicator 21</u>)	Concentrations of intestinal enterococci are within established standards	Increasing trend in the <u>percentage of intestinal enterococci concentration</u> measurements <u>that fall in the approved GES categories as established in Decision IG.20/9 and the within established standards (levels of intestinal enterococci comply with established national or international standards, such as EU 2006/7 Directive.)</u>

Table 2: Operational Objectives, IMAP Candidate Common Indicators 26 and 27, GES Definitions and Revised Targets for Ecological Objective 11.

Ecological Objective_11 (EO 11): EO 11. Energy including underwater noise			
Operational Objective	Indicator	GES	Targets
11.1 Energy inputs into the marine, environment, especially noise from, human activities, are minimized ⁵	11.1.1. Proportion of days and geographical distribution where loud, low, and mid-frequency impulsive sounds exceed levels that are likely to entail significant impact on marine animal (<u>Candidate Common Indicator 26</u>) ⁶	<u>Noise from human activities causes no significant impact on marine and coastal ecosystems</u>	State: <u>The extent (%) of days with impulsive sounds sources, their distribution within the year and spatially habitat of noise-sensitive species within the assessment area, are that is impacted by impulsive noise events is below thresholds.</u>

⁵ Decision IG.20/4, Annex II

⁶ Decision IG.20/4, Annex II; IG.22/7

11.2. Energy inputs into the marine, environment, especially noise from, human activities, are minimized	11.2.1. Levels of continuous low frequency sounds with the use of models as appropriate <u>(Candidate Common Indicator 27)</u>⁷	<u>Noise from human activities causes no significant impact on marine and coastal ecosystems</u>	State: <u>Noise levels at monitoring stations are below thresholds; The extent (% or km²)(%) of the assessment area which is above levels causing disturbance to sensitive marine animal is below limits, or such limits are exceeded for a limited amount of time.</u>
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⁷ ibidem