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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

Agenda Item 3: Thematic Decisions

Agenda Item 5: Ministerial Session

Reports of the Thematic Ad-Hoc Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD, Istanbul, Türkiye, 12-13 February 2025) and of the 21st Meeting of the MCSD (Corinth, Greece, 24-26 June 2025)

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UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2025

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Thematic Ad-Hoc Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)

Istanbul, Türkiye, 12-13 February 2025

Report of the Thematic Ad-Hoc Meeting of the MCSD

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UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2025

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Introduction

1. Following the kind offer of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Istanbul Centre, and in consultation with the President and Members of the MCSD Steering Committee, the Thematic ad-hoc Meeting of the MCSD was convened on 12-13 February 2025 in Istanbul, Türkiye.

2. The objective of the Meeting was to hold a thematic discussion on the first draft of the updated MSSD, including its flagship initiatives, as well as on the initial elements of the updated Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF).

3. The list of participants is provided in Annex I of the present report.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting

4. The Meeting was opened at 10:00 on Wednesday, 12 February 2025, by Ms. Anne-France Didier, President of the MCSD. Welcome addresses (full statements are provided in Annex IV) were delivered by:

- Mr. Fatih Turan, General Director Environmental Management of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change of Türkiye;
- Ms. Damla Hacıibrahimoğlu, Policy Analyst of OECD Istanbul Centre, on behalf of Ms. Seda Sevgi, Deputy Director of OECD Istanbul Centre;
- Ms. Tatjana Hema, Coordinator of UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention, who inter alia thanked France for the additional financial contribution supporting the implementation of the MCSD meetings in view of the MSSD update.

Agenda item 2: Organizational Matters

a) Adoption of the Provisional Agenda
b) Election of Officers
c) Organization of Work

5. The Coordinator proposed some change in the annotated agenda (UNEP/MED WG.600/2), as follows:

- The Meeting will not have conclusions and recommendations, but an overall agreement on the updated text of the MSSD (UNEP/MED WG.600/4) and on the next steps, in view of the 21st Meeting of the MCSD of June that will have to validate the updated MSSD;
- The Secretariat will present the main conclusions steaming from the independent MSSD Final Evaluation Report (UNEP/MED WG.600/3), not opening the floor for comments as the document is to be discussed and validated by the 21st Meeting of the MCSD.

6. The thematic had hoc Meeting of the MCSD reviewed and adopted the Provisional Agenda with the proposed changes.

7. The Members of the Steering Committee of the MCSD, elected by the 20th Meeting of the MCSD of 14-16 June 2023, in accordance with the MCSD Constitutive Documents, Rule 17 of the Rules of Procedure, served as officers of the Meeting.

Agenda item 3: Final Evaluation of the 2016-2025 Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)

8. Hon. Mr. Pedro Roque, Head of Delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), PAM Vice President and President of the 3rd Standing Committee, welcomed the final evaluation of the MSSD and delivered some comments on sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

9. The Secretariat briefly presented the overall conclusions of the independent MSSD Final Evaluation Report.

10. The MCSD Members commented that the MSSD Final Evaluation Report was well-structured, objective, of good quality, comprehensive as it anchored recommendations on recent developments at the global and EU levels, while highlighting that, overall, the main conclusions of the MSSD Mid-Term evaluation are confirmed. More specific comments included the following: the regional picture on SDGs implementation shall be complemented by the global picture that presents a low rate of achievement of SDGs targets; the local communities shall be further involved in the conception of development polices; lessons learned shall be better highlighted in particular with reference to economic issues; it is important to improve communication, in particular toward the civil society; inclusion of actions on green finance in the updated MSSD is crucial; efforts at national level are also to be highlighted; the Report shall be publicized, as it represents a good model for other evaluations.

11. The Coordinator indicated that the 21st Meeting of the MCSD of June 2025 will discuss the details of the MSSD Final Evaluation Report, acknowledging that the Report has been elaborated by an independent evaluator and therefore related contents and conclusions cannot be changed as such, while the MCSD will decide which conclusions are to be considered for the update of the MSSD.

12. The Coordinator also stressed the need to discuss how the evaluation exercise should be implemented in the future, in order to be more inclusive and efficient.

Agenda item 4: Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period

13. Ms. Leïla Chikhaoui Mahdaoui, Former Minister for the Environment of Tunisia, opened the Agenda Point 4, presenting the national perspectives, policies and strategies to advance sustainable development in Tunisia. The MCSD Meeting thanked Ms. Leïla Chikhaoui Mahdaoui for the resourceful and extensive presentation and convened that Tunisia represents a good example to be shared and potentially replicated.

14. The Coordinator anticipated that the next Meeting of the MCSD might be postponed to 24-26 June, instead of 17-19 June as initially planned, given that the UNOC-3 will take place the week before, on 9-13 June in Nice. She added that precise dates and place of the 21st Meeting of the MCSD will be confirmed in upcoming weeks.

15. The Coordinator presented the updated text of the MSSD, which was shown on the screen, and the Members of the MCSD commented on the text. The overall comments and proposals of the Thematic Ad-Hoc Meeting of the MCSD are summarized below, while the updated text of the MSSD is enclosed as Annex III to this Report, reflecting the discussion.

16. Furthermore, during the Meeting, the Secretariat shared a Conference Room Paper (UNEP/MED WG.600/CRP.1) on additional descriptive elements of the MSSD Section *'Introduction and Background'*, which are highlighted in blue in Annex III, for easier reference.

17. On the MSSD Section *'Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025: Objectives, Strategic Directions and Actions'*, the Secretariat made the following proposals that were accepted:

- Climate Change to become Objective 1 of the updated MSSD
- The titles of the Objectives have to maintain to the extent possible their generic nature, in order not to imply potential exclusions in terms of issues to tackle, or/and stakeholders as well as processes.

18. The overall comments of the Members of the MCSD tacked the following elements:

- Section *'Introduction and Background'*
    - Paragraph 15 be deleted as outdated
    - Paragraphs 17 and 19 to be merged/summarized
    - Paragraph 20 to be further developed based on the conclusions steaming from the MSSD Final Evaluation
- Section on *'Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2035: Objectives, Strategic Directions and Actions'*
    - Greece made some suggestions for minor updates of the wording of the six objectives of the MSSD in order to better capture recent emerging priorities and challenges for the region including the need to increase resilience and adaption capacities, to promote circular economy and sustainable financing, which have been included in the attached updated MSSD document.
    - Greece, COMPSUD, Eco Union and GWP-Med sent updated proposals in writing during the Meeting, as requested by the Secretariat, in particular related to the list of issues addressed by the six objectives of the MSSD and on the titles of the Strategic Directions of Objective 5, "T*ransition towards a green and blue economy*".
    - On Targets, the Meeting commented that it would be ideal to aim at 15 targets maximum, that should be taken from existing relevant current global and regional commitments/frameworks, adapted to the Mediterranean region if possible. It was agreed that a target on renewable energies shall equally be introduced while the Secretariat will coordinate with GFCM on targets under Objective 1. Targets shall be better linked to MSSD dashboard of indicators, while verifying the work on analysis and statistics of UN DESA (Department of Economic and Social Affairs).
- Section on the *Tables of Strategic Directions, Actions, flagship initiatives and indicators*
    - The current MSSD includes more than 130 implementation indicators which are associated to each MSSD action. The experience up-to-now has showed that the Secretariat and the Contracting Parties do not have the capacities to follow up all these indicators, therefore it might be appropriate to have indicators at higher level, that might not necessarily be linked to each individual actions but rather aggregated at MSSD operational objectives/targets/SDGs level. It might be envisaged to have 3 to 4 indicators per MSSD Objective, linked, as appropriate, to the updated Targets. There was general agreement that the indicators are to be defined based on updated targets.
    - There were no major comments on the update of the actions included under the Six MSSD Objectives, while on new actions of green finance under the Objective 5, Plan Bleu/RAC specified that the foreseen guidelines/taxonomy for sustainable investments will provide indications at regional level that Countries have to develop into actions at national level and based on own specificities, with reference for example to carbon pricing, green taxes/revenues, etc.

- Section on '*Implementation and monitoring* of the *Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development'*
    - To consider the triennial workplan for MSSD implementation. The Secretariat expressed concerns about the added value of this proposal pointing out that the modality of a multiannual workplan was used in the past but replaced since the adoption of the first MSSD with its table of actions. One member of the MCSD also agreed that having a triennial workplan was not considered efficient in practice as such a cycle does not coincide with the MCSD biennial Meetings cycle nor with the Agenda 2030 and MSSD timeline.
    - Paragraph 180 to be updated by deleting the reference to the Officers of the Secretariat.
    - Under Action 7.1.4 add a reference to the development of a communication strategy.
    - Under Action 7.3.3 add a reference to mapping funding opportunities and develop a MSSD funding strategy.

19. Plan Bleu/RAC introduced the proposal on MSSD core indicators (UNEP/MED WG. 600/Inf.4) whose aim is to provide a more in-depth analysis on some key issues and with the objective to communicate key figures at regional level, such as the sea temperature increase and climate change adaptation as one of the main factors affecting sustainable development in the Mediterranean. It was added that the limited number of core indicators can be used to support MSSD outreach activities towards policy makers and broader stakeholders, by providing an easy path to grasp a picture of the main aspects, challenges and opportunities of sustainable development. One MCSD Member asked to receive the methodological factsheet for the definition and measurement of the core indicators, and, also, suggested to consider adding an extra indicator, adequately formulated, on energy consumption, energy intensity (total or per key sector) and penetration of RES in total energy consumption and in power generation, as a key issue that reflects the potential and challenges in the region

20. The eleven new MSSD flagship initiatives (UNEP/MED WG.600/5) were briefly presented by the leading MCSD Members, RACs and the Secretariat. The Meeting well received the new flagship initiatives, while the President of the MCSD specified that the flagship initiatives are not compulsory but rather opportunities for the MCSD Members and stakeholders to cooperate on topics of interest, support funds identifications, and potential replication at national level.

21. One Member of the MCSD highlighted the interest of her country in the new flagship initiatives on Protection and restoration of Seagrass/Posidonia Meadows as crucial ecosystems; Towards a Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Blue Tourism in the Mediterranean; Mediterranean Network of Zero Net Cities.

22. One Member of the MCSD asked that the Strategy for the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus (WEFE Nexus) is presented for validation at the 21st Meeting of the MCSD and to COP 24 for endorsement, with a mandate to prepare the related Action Plan.

23. On the new flagship initiative on Youth involvement in the MCSD and MSSD implementation, one Member of the MCSD highlighted that discussion on youth involvement started at COP 21 held in Naples in December 2019, thus the relevant new flagship should be updated accordingly. Furthermore, regarding the identified potential partners, INFO/RAC should also be included, as it is one of the regional centers actively engaged in involving youth in the Barcelona Convention.

24. The Secretariat specified that the implication, engagement and leadership of MCSD Members in new flagship initiatives is crucial, as the flagship initiatives demonstrate the delivery of the MSSD also at national level via replication actions. Some MCSD members also leading flagship initiatives stressed the need to secure funding and financial support at a more central level in order to promote their delivery.

25. It was also proposed to simplify the presentation of the new flagship initiatives by preparing a shorter document focusing on key objectives, key actions, partners and linkages with MSSD Objectives, targets and links to Barcelona Convention Protocols, when relevant, and to add this presentation as an Annex to the updated MSSD. The Secretariat will work on a proposal on how to integrate current and new flagship initiatives and d taking also into account current flagship initiatives that have not been launched yet.

26. The President of the MCSD suggested that the updated factsheet of the current flagship initiatives (UNEP/MED WG. 600/Inf.3) shall be published, with the support of INFO/RAC.

Agenda item 5: Elements for the updated 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF)

27. The MCSD welcomed the information document on the elements for the updated 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF) (UNEP/MED WG. 600/Inf.7) and highlighted its concrete elements for the update of the RCCAF and the good methodology followed with an independent assessment complemented by national inputs through a Questionnaire.

28. One MCSD member suggested that in order for the updated RCCAF to be relevant to countries, it should provide an overall assessment of adaptation challenges in the region and identification of hotspots; proposed governance and strategic approaches at the central government level in countries (e.g. key elements to be taken into account in drafting or revising NASs); list of proposed no-regret measures to climate-proof key economic sectors as tool boxes; provisions for the exchange of best practices and for enhancing data collection and predictions; as well as a follow-up and monitoring component.

29. The Coordinator recalled that the COP23 mandate is to update the current RCCAF, not to propose a radical change, adding that it should be discussed if a more concrete and detailed framework is needed to further support the Contracting Parties, taking into account the reports of MedECC that include a number of measures to tackle climate change.

30. It was agreed that the MCSD Members will provide comments in writing, trying also to benefit from relevant on-going work in the Region on the subject.

31. The Meeting asked to the Secretariat to send the updated MSSD for comments well in advance to allow time to undertake necessary consultation at national level.

Agenda item 6: Any Other Matters

32. The Meeting did not raise any AoB for consideration.

Agenda item 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

33. The Thematic ad hoc MCSD Meeting agreed that the MSSD document, as attached in Annex III, and incorporating the text amendments proposed by members and the UNEP/MAP Secretariat during the meeting, would be the basis for further work, based on discussions held at the Thematic ad hoc MCSD Meeting.

34. It was agreed to share the report of the Meeting as early as possible, preferably before mid-March 20025.

35. By the end of March 2025 at the latest, the Secretariat will send to the MCSD Members the updated MSSD, incorporating the work on targets and indicators, with a request for comments by mid-April 2025

36. The Secretariat committed to send the final version of the updated MSSD document in view of the 21st MCSD Meeting of June as early as possible to allow time for internal consultations at the national level for MCSD country members.

37. On the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF), a technical workshop may be organized in May/June 2025 to discuss in more detail the options and elements for its update

Agenda item 8: Closure of the Meeting

38. The Meeting was closed by the Chair of the MCSD at approximately 17:45 on Thursday, 13 February 2025.

Timetable

(The timetable is the local time of Istanbul, Time: GMT+3)

Wednesday, 12 February 2025		
Time	**Agenda item**	**Documents**
10:00 – 10:30	Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting	
10:30 – 10:45	Agenda item 2: Organizational Matters *a) Adoption of the Provisional Agenda* *b) Election of the Officers* *c) Organization of Work*	UNEP/MED WG.600/1 UNEP/MED WG.600/2/Rev.1 UNEP/MED WG.600/Inf.1/Rev.1 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.2
10:45- 13:00	Agenda item 3: Final Evaluation of the 2016-2025 Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)	UNEP/MED WG.600/3 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.3
13:00 – 14:30	*Lunch break*	
14:30 – 16:00	Agenda item 4: Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period	UNEP/MED WG.600/4 UNEP/MED WG.600/5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.3 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.4 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.6
16:00 – 16:30	*Break*	
16:30 – 17:30	Agenda item 4: Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period (Continuation)	UNEP/MED WG.600/4 UNEP/MED WG.600/5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.3 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.4 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.6

Thursday 13 February 2025		
Time	**Agenda item**	**Documents**
10:00 –11:30	Agenda item 4: Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period (Continuation)	UNEP/MED WG.600/4 UNEP/MED WG.600/5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.3 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.4 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.6
11:30 – 12:00	*Break*	
12:00 – 13:00	Agenda item 4: Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period (Continuation)	UNEP/MED WG.600/4 UNEP/MED WG.600/5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.3 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.4 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.6
13:00 – 14:30	*Lunch break*	
14:30 – 17:00	Agenda item 5: Elements for the updated 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF)	UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.7
17:00 – 17:15	Agenda item 6: Any Other Matters	
17:15 – 18:00	Agenda item 7: Conclusions and Recommendations	
18:00	Agenda item 8: Closure of the Meeting	

Annex I

List of Participants

Thematic Ad-Hoc Meeting of the MCSD **12-13 February 2025, Istanbul, Türkiye**	
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Annex II

Agenda of the Thematic Ad-Hoc Meeting of the MCSD

Provisional Agenda

Agenda item 1 **Opening of the Meeting**

Agenda item 2 **Organizational Matters**
a) Adoption of the Provisional Agenda
b) Election of Officers
c) Organization of Work

Agenda item 3 **Final evaluation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD)**

Agenda item 4 **Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period**

Agenda item 5 **Elements for the updated 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF)**

Agenda item 6 **Any Other Matters**

Agenda item 7 **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Agenda item 8 **Closure of the Meeting**

Annex III

Updated MSSD Document

Annex IV

Welcome Speeches and Opening Remarks/ Statements

Speech of Mr. Fatih Turan, General Director of the Environmental Management

Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change of Turkiye

Honorable President,

Head of OECD Istanbul Center,
Coordinator of UNEP/MAP and
Esteemed Members of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development,

It is a great pleasure to come together and welcome you all in our ancient city of Istanbul, a meeting point of continents and civilizations. Once again, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to each of you. Additionally, I am pleased to express my gratitude to the Government of France for its contributions and to the OECD for hosting this important meeting.

I hope that this meeting, which has brought us together today, will enhance regional cooperation in the coming period and contribute to our common goals for the Mediterranean.

Since 1995, we have been carrying out studies for sustainable development with the participation of the Contracting Parties, institutions, and organizations working for the Mediterranean, academics, and non-governmental organizations. Especially in recent years, within the scope of environmental developments worldwide, the Commission has made significant contributions to determining the steps and strategies to be taken in the Mediterranean.

During this two-day meeting, discussions will be held on the current progress and updates of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) and the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework (RCCAF), which I believe will contribute to shaping the future of our Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean is a region rich in biodiversity, yet at the same time, it is one of the most vulnerable ecosystems, particularly concerning climate change. It is also home to millions of people and hosts intense economic activities. According to studies, by 2050, the Mediterranean coasts will face threats such as increasing waste and decreasing water resources due to rising population, climate-induced migrations, and a significant increase in energy demand.

Climate change is severely impacting the Mediterranean’s seas and coasts. As air temperatures rise, extreme heat events are becoming more frequent. This situation poses significant risks to sectors such as tourism, agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture. Additionally, rising sea levels lead to floods and coastal erosion.

All these threats demonstrate that joint efforts are inevitable for achieving a sustainable and climate-resilient future in the Mediterranean. The decisions we make in this meeting today will be a critical turning point for the Mediterranean's climate adaptation and sustainable development goals.

In this context, one of the most important decisions of the Portoroz Ministerial Declaration is the establishment of a new Regional Climate Change Action Centre (CC/RAC) in the Mediterranean. This center will play a central role in key areas such as climate change adaptation, policy development, and

enhancing the capacity of local governments. The guidance provided by CC/RAC will serve as an essential support mechanism in strengthening climate resilience and implementing sustainable solutions in Mediterranean countries.

Türkiye has completed its efforts in large-scale plans such as the "National Circular Economy Strategy and Action Plan," the Green Deal Action Plan, and the 12th Development Plan. Additionally, Türkiye has long demonstrated its commitment to sustainability through the Zero Waste approach, which it has developed and implemented at the national level and is working to promote internationally. We intend to enhance and expand all our efforts both at the national level and through international cooperation for the future of the Mediterranean.

Moreover, the Istanbul Environmentally Friendly Cities Award, which will be presented for the fifth time this year is a significant initiative that encourages sustainable urbanization along the Mediterranean coasts. This initiative highlights the sustainable efforts of cities in areas such as climate change mitigation, conservation of natural ecosystems, efficient resource use, urban resilience, transportation, waste management, and water and energy efficiency.

The award is not only a recognition mechanism for Mediterranean cities but also a powerful tool that encourages city administrations to take concrete steps toward sustainable development goals. Thanks to Türkiye’s financial support and the promotional and awareness-raising efforts of the Secretariat and INFO/RAC, the award has received great interest and is expected to have an even broader impact in the future.

Mr. President and Distinguished Participants,

As the Parties to the Mediterranean Action Plan, we must enhance our collective efforts for the Mediterranean and prioritize our works for a livable Mediterranean.

As Mediterranean countries, we continue to set an example for other regional conventions in various areas. In this regard, we must promote green transformation and circular economy approaches in the Mediterranean basin. These approaches prioritize the efficient and sustainable use of limited resources, and we should implement successful practices across the basin.

Additionally, we must collaborate to effectively and successfully implement the Blue Economy in the Mediterranean, which will ensure the efficient and sustainable use of marine resources.

Throughout these two-day meetings in Istanbul, where we will discuss the strategies and approaches to be pursued over the next decade for the Mediterranean, I extend my gratitude to all participants who have contributed and supported this process.

With the hope of coming together again in times when we can achieve our shared goal of a Mediterranean full of joy and prosperity through collective efforts,

Wishing you enjoyable moments in Istanbul, the pearl of the Bosphorus and the city of dreams,

I extend my respectful greetings to you all.

I wish you success.

Speech of Ms Damla H Dabak

Policy Analyst, OECD Istanbul Centre

Ladies and gentlemen,

Esteemed participants,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to the OECD Istanbul Centre today for the **Ad hoc Thematic Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD).** We are delighted to provide a platform for this important gathering, which will not only review past achievements but also update the **Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) for 2026-2035**—a crucial period for advancing our global goals amid both challenges and opportunities.

Since our establishment three years ago, we have hosted over 30 events, bringing together more than 3,000 stakeholders, including representatives from international organizations, UN bodies, government officials, and leading experts. As a key policy dialogue platform and regional hub, we play a strategic role in extending the OECD's global outreach, **with a strong focus on the Mediterranean region**. Given Istanbul's unique geopolitical and economic position, we are truly at the heart of the Mediterranean—facilitating knowledge exchange, fostering collaboration, and shaping policy discussions that will help define the future of the region.

At the Centre, our work is deeply rooted in core priorities as:

- Climate action
- Connectivity and infrastructure
- Gender equality
- Business climate
- Private sector development

However, as we advance in these areas, we increasingly recognize the need to address cross-cutting issues. Climate change directly affects transport and infrastructure resilience, while the way we design infrastructure plays a crucial role in achieving climate goals. At the same time, integrating gender considerations into policies is essential for fostering inclusive growth and sustainability. A key example of our efforts in this regard is the **Union for the Mediterranean Regional Integration Report**, where we explored the intersection of transport, climate, and gender—along with the critical role of finance—underscoring the importance of regional cooperation in addressing these challenges.

Our engagement in climate and environmental sustainability has grown stronger. We have hosted a series of high-level events to foster dialogue and advance global climate commitments:

In October last year, together with the UNDP Regional Hub, we host the **'Investing in Inclusive Climate Action'** as a cross-regional dialogue. Over 250 experts from Eurasia, SEE, LAC, MENA, and SASEA regions gathered to discuss how to make climate action more gender responsive. The event's outcome document aimed at shaping policies that integrate gender considerations into climate investments and were presented at COP 29 in Azerbaijan.

Again, with the UNDP Regional Hub, we held the **'Regional Conference on Scaling-Up Climate Action and Finance'** that provided a platform to advance climate finance frameworks in Europe and

the CIS region, gathering 70 high-level participants from 13 countries to discuss strategies ahead of COP29 in Azerbaijan.

In collaboration with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), we held the first **ever 'Mediterranean Green Week'** last May, bringing together policymakers, businesses, and civil society to discuss the 2030 Agenda for a Greener Mediterranean and the UfM Climate Action Plan.

'Decarbonising Transport in Emerging Economies : Policy Dialogue in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region' was another key event hosted at the Centre in June last year in partnership with the International Transport Forum (ITF). The discussions focused on aligning regional transport policies with global decarbonisation goals.

We also supported flagship OECD projects such as the **Green Action Task Force, Sustainable Infrastructure Programme in Asia and Supporting Green Transition through Circular Economy roadmaps for Western Balkans**.

We extend beyond our geographical vicinity too. One recent example is the **Circular Economy and Social Cohesion** side event we co-hosted in Colombia in October, as part of the 3rd OECD LACRP Ministerial Summit on Social Inclusion. The discussions focused on how circular economy policies can drive social inclusion, bringing together government officials, experts, and civil society representatives.

As you may notice from the breadth and depth of these events, we run an ambitious programme and deeply appreciate the value of partnerships and collective actions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The challenges we face today—climate change, environmental sustainability, and inclusive development—demand collective action, cross-sector collaboration, and bold policy solutions. The OECD has a strong foundation of policy tools and frameworks that can support UNEP MAP's objectives, particularly in the areas of finance and investment, which are essential for achieving climate goals in the Mediterranean region.

There is immense value in deepening our collaboration and amplifying our collective voice. By working together, we can develop innovative solutions, mobilize resources more effectively, and drive meaningful change for the region's sustainable future.

Through the OECD Istanbul Centre, we remain committed to fostering knowledge exchange, building strategic partnerships, and facilitating impactful policy discussions.

We look forward to today's discussions and to shaping the future together.

Thank you.

Opening remarks by Ms. Tatjana Hema, Coordinator

UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat

Distinguished Members of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development,

Distinguished Delegates,

Dear Colleagues,

- On behalf of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP)-Barcelona Convention Secretariat, I wish to thank you for being with us for these two important days of work
- I also wish to express my gratitude to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Istanbul Centre that kindly offered to host Thematic Ad-Hoc Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development in beautiful Istanbul
- We met last time in June 2023 in Marseille in the occasion of the 20th meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development where it was decided to update the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, with the dedicated support of the Extended Steering Committee of the MCSD, and taking into account the most recent global and regional commitments and cooperation frameworks, as well as potential thematic and systemic gaps
- The Strategy in fact confirms being a relevant and sound framework of cooperation for the Region that does not need a deep revision but rather an alignment with most recent development and opportunities for cooperation
- Since the last meeting of the MCSD in June 2023, important concrete progress has been made, under the committed Presidency and lead of France which I would also like to thank also for the financial voluntary contribution provided to support, among the other actions, the numerous meetings dedicated to the MSSD update
- Since October 2023, 5 Extended Steering Committee meetings have been held, one MCSD Steering Committee, 3 Working Groups for the MSSD Revision on Marine Spatial Planning, Circular Economy and Sustainable Finance have been launched and are still working, the MSSD Final Evaluation has been delivered, and the Secretariat has promoted the update of the MSSD in a number of high-level regional events, as for instance the Mediterranean Green Week, the UfM Platforms on Environment and Climate Change and the 2024 Our Ocean Conference
- The documents that we will discuss today represent the outcome of all this work and allow me to thank the MCSD Members that volunteered also as Members of the Extended Steering Committee of the MCSD, as well as the RACs for their contribution, in particular PAP/RAC, Plan Bleu and SCP/RAC-MedWaves for coordinating the 3 Working Groups for the MSSD Revision
- Dear Colleagues, the work is in progress, and your contribution during the two days of work is crucial in order to further progress in defining an updated MSSD that will cover the next period 2026-2035 and that effectively reflects the mandate of the COP23 for a swift update of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development in order to effectively implement Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and its SDGs at the regional level, seeking to amend current unsustainable trajectories and place the region on alternative pathways to sustainability and resilience
- The update of the MSSD is a unique opportunity to upscale the green transition and climate resilience of the region, to promote the multi-use of the Mediterranean sea and coasts, thus further promoting sustainable blue economy as key economic sector, to ensure circular and regenerative use conservation of Biodiversity and Natural Resources, including water and forests, to promote nature based solutions, to embed in the MSSD the green sustainable finance and therefore pursuit

investment paths that reinforce sustainable business models and circular economy, while further supporting sub-national and local authorities as active actors especially within the urban dimension, and better involve youth, women, private sector and investors

- In this context, the MSSD flagship initiatives should be considered as a key enabler for the MSSD effective implementation and impact, both at national and regional level, and should be upscaled in the framework of the updated MSSD.
- The MSSD flagship initiatives should represent the Strategy in an exemplary way, proposing demonstrative actions with significant potential for engagement, progressively supporting stakeholders and institutional commitment as well as visibility, therefore increasing the outreach and attractiveness to the Strategy, also in terms of financial support
- This is the reason why I have called this Thematic Ad-Hoc MCSC meeting before the regular MCSD meeting of June, as we must seize a unique chance to reflect and discuss actions and trajectories that prioritize sustainable economic opportunity, poverty reduction, healthy Mediterranean sea and coasts and climate resilience at once. This is not only crucial; it is within the region's reach as path to achieve SDGs in our region!
- This in a nutshell is the substance of the proposed updated elements of the MSSD, while the 2015 UN Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), the European Green Deal, 2024 UN Resolution on the Pact for the Future, the 2022 UNGA Resolution, "Our Ocean, Our Future, Our Responsibility", the 2024 UNEA 6 Res.15 on Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution represent the reference policy frameworks, together with the Post-2020 SAPBIO and other UNEP/MAP recently adopted policies, including Programmes of Measures to achieve Good Environmental Status of Mediterranean Sea and Coast
- Dear Colleagues, let me bring to your attention also on the update of the 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework
- As the most recent MedECC reports and Sixth Assessment Report have highlighted, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, if global warming exceeds 1.5 to 2°C above the pre-industrial level, in the coming decades the impact of climate change is projected to be importantly exacerbated, and the region is expected to remain among the regions most affected by climate change at global level!
- Significantly enhanced efforts and actions are needed in order to adapt to inevitable changes, mitigate change drivers and increase resilience!
- As for the MSSD whose objective 4 focuses Climate Change, the update of the 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework must contribute to these enhanced efforts! Therefore, I count on your contribution also to this discussion
- Finally, Colleagues, let me highlight that this year coincides with the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Barcelona Convention and the 30th Anniversary of the Mediterranean Commission on the Sustainable Development

- 2025 and COP24 represent thus a landmark moment for the MAP System and the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development
- We have recently launched the Odyssey Reloaded, a dedicated campaign on the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of UNEP/MAP and Secretariat has been working with France, as host-country of the 2025 UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-3) on a High-Level event during the Mediterranean Day at UNOC-3, on 10 June, and under your guidance the MSSD for the next period 2026-2035 shall be one of the key milestones of the upcoming COP24!
- We are committed, now more than ever, to fulfill the MSSD vision that guides us towards sustainable prosperity, healthy ecosystems and climate resilience in our Mediterranean region

- I count on this thematic ad hoc MCSD to be a meeting of delivery also in view of the 21st MCSD meeting in June, and I invite all MSCD Members to continue to be more than ever an active part of the MAP-Barcelona Convention system's response to sustainable development challenges and opportunities for implementing our common agenda on SDGs in the region.
- Best wishes for a fruitful and successful meeting! Thank you

Speech of Hon. Pedro Roque (Portugal)

PAM Vice President and President of the 3rd Standing Committee

Excellencies, Dear colleagues and Honorable Guests,

It is a great honour for me to address the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development and to represent the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean – a full-fledged member of this important Commission.

Let me begin by recalling that the Barcelona Convention constitutes the principal regional legally binding Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) in the Mediterranean and the epitome of international law promoting multilateralism and environmental sustainability.

In this context, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (**MSSD) stands out as a critical tool** for addressing the region's unique challenges: as you know, the Mediterranean is a "Climate Change Hotspot", a "Global Biodiversity Hotspot" and the second-fastest warming region of the world.

We welcome the outcomes of the final evaluation of the MSSD and are pleased to see the notable progress achieved.

However, the strategy needs to be strengthened in terms of action planning, and by using more preventive, synergetic and inclusive approaches.

The monitoring process is well set and provides a broad range of indicators which play an important role in measuring the progress made by CPs towards the SDGs.

Nonetheless, we fully concur with the conclusions of the final evaluation: the number of indicators should be balanced between the different MSSD objectives and be more specific while refining the strategy to be more streamlined and results-oriented would help minimize redundancy and avoid fragmentation into isolated sectoral objectives.

To this end, the role of parliaments and dialogue among them is essential in this process: PAM strongly promotes the tools of interparliamentary diplomacy and enhanced regional cooperation and fosters an environment that encourages concrete legislative actions within a common legislative framework.

We have already taken important steps towards this end: we joined forces with the UNEP/MAP to produce the "Parliamentarian's guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast".

The guide highlights the value of the Barcelona Convention's provisions, and Sen. Petrucci, PAM Rapporteur on Environment, has specifically recalled the importance of their implementation in her report on environment to be presented at the 19th Plenary Session of PAM in Rome.

Nevertheless, we recognize that visibility needs to be systematically ensured beyond the UNEP/MAP system, in order to progressively engage with more and more stakeholders and mobilize actors, particularly at the national level of CPs.

To this end, a more effective participatory process of stakeholders must be at the core of this strategy.

The third edition of the Economic Parliamentary Forum of Marrakesh, which PAM will host on 9-10 May, is a unique opportunity to increase visibility beyond the UNEP/MAP system, serving as a platform to engage in dialogue among 34 member states and partners, private sector, academia, IOs.

Last but not least, at the next PAM Plenary Session in Rome, delegates will discuss a proposal made by the PAM Rapporteur on the right to water on the utility to recognize the legal personality of the Mediterranean Sea. This aims at seeking to redefine the Mediterranean Sea as a legal entity capable of having subjective rights and legal obligations, to protect it from illegal and harmful activities.

The proposal represents a significant step towards protecting ecosystems, aligning with the principles of the Barcelona Convention, with the aim of preventing, reducing, and combating pollution in the Mediterranean Sea while preserving its marine environment.

Dear Colleagues,

In conclusion, we reiterate our total and unconditional support to the Barcelona Convention system, to the Commission and its strategy, united in our collective commitment to safeguarding and protecting the Mediterranean.

Thank you all very much.

UNITED NATIONS

EP

UNEP/MED WG.625/8

UN environment programme

Mediterranean Action Plan
Barcelona Convention

31 July 2025
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The 21st Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)

Corinth, Greece, 24-26 June 2025

Report of the 21st Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development

For environmental and economic reasons, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2025

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Introduction

1. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) and in consultation with the President and the Members of the MCSD Steering Committee (SC), the 21st Meeting of the MCSD (hereafter the Meeting) was convened in Corinth, Greece, on 24-26 June 2025.

2. The primary objective of the Meeting was to review, redraft where needed and endorse the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 (MSSD) which is presented as finally formulated during the Meeting in Annex III of this Report, and its flagship initiatives, for submission to the 24th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP24, Cairo, Egypt, 2-5 December 2025).

3. The list of participants is provided in Annex I of the present report.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting

4. The Meeting was opened at 10:00 on Tuesday 24 June 2025, by Ms. Anne-France Didier, President of the MCSD (hereafter the President). The President highlighted the pivotal importance of the Meeting for the final elaboration and validation of the 2026-2035 Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) as a key regional cooperation framework that is fully aligned with the overall process and momentum of renewed strong commitment and vision towards sustainability and acceleration of the green transition in the region, through the constructive collaboration of all stakeholders.

5. The Coordinator highlighted the pivotal importance of 2025 and recent events, such as the 9th Our Ocean Conference (15-17 April 2024, Athens, Greece) and the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC-3, 9-13 June 2025, Nice, France), that have built the momentum around the need to further boost sustainable development and climate resilience in the region, and that has culminated in the UNOC-3 Declaration of the Ministers of the Mediterranean adopted in Nice, on 10 June. She equally highlighted how the update of the MSSD aligns with this momentum and related initiatives.

Agenda item 2: Organizational Matters

a) Election of the Steering Committee

b) Adoption of the Provisional Agenda

c) Organization of Work

6. The Meeting expressed gratitude for the cooperative approach and vision to the outgoing President Anne-France Didier, France, in leading the MCSD in the biennium 2024-2025. The Meeting equally thanked the other Members of the MCSD SC, i.e. the Vice-Presidents, Mr. Mitja Bricelj, Slovenia, Mr. Mohammed Maktit, Morocco, Mr. Abderraja Salhi, Tunisia, Mr. Najib Saab, Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED), Mr. Almotaz Abadi Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Rapporteur, Mr. Josep Canals Molina, MedCities.

7. The Meeting elected its Steering Committee in accordance with the MCSD Constitutive Documents, Rule 17 of the Rules of Procedure, as follows:

- President: Mr. Mohammed Maktit, Morocco
- Vice-President: Ms. Samah Saleh, Egypt, (*ex officio,* as representative of the forthcoming Presidency of the Contracting Parties)
- Vice-President: Ms. Branka Pivčević Novak, Croatia
- Vice-President: Ms. Andri Christoforou, Cyprus

- Vice-President: Mr. Maher Mahjoub, Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN-MED)
- Vice-President: Mr. Michael J. Scoullos, Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development (COMPSUD)
- Rapporteur: Mr. Josep Canals Molina, MedCities

8. The Members of the elected MCSD SC served as Officers of the Meeting.

9. The Meeting reviewed and adopted the Provisional Agenda, as presented in the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.625/1 and the timetable included in the Provisional Annotated Agenda (UNEP/MED WG.625/2).

Agenda Item 3: Report by the Coordinator on Sustainable Development Activities for the period June 2023 – May 2025

10. The Coordinator presented the progress on Sustainable Development Activities since the 20th Meeting of the MCSD (14-16 June, 2025, Marseille, France), as contained in documents UNEP/MED WG.625/3 and UNEP/MED WG.625/Inf.3, including the extensive MSSD update process and the developments towards implementation of the flagship initiatives, as well as communication and outreach actions.

11. Several Participants congratulated France for the organization of a visionary UNOC-3, as well as the Secretariat for the successful celebration of the 50th Anniversary of UNEP/MAP and the 30th Anniversary of the Post-Rio Barcelona Convention, during the Mediterranean Day on 10 June, as well as for the Declaration of the Environment Ministers of the Mediterranean as a key achievement and output of UNOC-3 for our region.

12. The Coordinator acknowledged and thanked the commitment of the Contracting Parties in supporting a strong presence of the UNEP/MAP to these events, as key opportunity to upscale its work through contributions and achievements aligned with the vision, objectives and mandate of the MCSD and of the 23rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP23, Portoroz, Slovenia, 5-8 December 2023) and its Portoroz Ministerial Declaration.

13. The participants in their discussion welcomed the good progress on Sustainable Development activities for the period June 2023 – May 2025, including the advancement of the current flagship initiatives, and thanked the Secretariat for the comprehensiveness of the progress report documents.

14. The need to further promote engagement with diverse stakeholders, communities, civil society, local authorities, and private sectors, in order to ensure the MSSD is pursued also at local level was pointed out, thus supporting a progressively effective impact. In the same line it was equally recommended to reinforce the cooperation with regional relevant networks.

15. Emphasis was put on the need to further strengthen work at national level and keep high in national policy agendas the ambition of the MSSD as a key regional refence document to support sustainable development in the Mediterranean. Following this first exchange on the progress achieved as presented by the Secretariat, the Members of the MCSD briefly reported on their own efforts to support the MSSD implementation and the work of the MCSD since the 20th MCSD meeting.

16. The EU informed on the 2025 EU Water Resilience Strategy[1] which is based on restoring and protecting the water cycle, building a water-smart economy and ensuring access to clean and affordable

[1] European Water Resilience Strategy - European Commission

water for all and contributes to the global water agenda, as lately discussed at the UN 2023 Water Conference. She added that the EU Ocean Pact[2] is a comprehensive strategy that is built around six priorities: Protecting and restoring ocean health; Boosting the competitiveness of the EU sustainable blue economy; Supporting coastal and island communities, and outermost regions; Advancing ocean research, knowledge, skills and innovation; Enhancing maritime security and defense; Strengthening EU Ocean diplomacy and international ocean governance.

17. PAM brought to the attention of the Meeting the resolution voted unanimously by the Parliaments' representations of PAM and related to the alarming situation of the polluted air, soil, sea, food by perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances. The issue has not been yet sufficiently addressed, despite it representing a serious health problem globally and for the Mediterranean, where the Land-Based Sources Protocol of the Barcelona Convention offers a robust and legally binding framework for action (the full statement is provided in Annex V to this report). PAM also informed that on 15-17 October 2025 in Naples, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation will organize the 11th edition of the Mediterranean Dialogues event[3], where a special Ministerial session will be dedicated to the implementation of the 2024 UN Pact for the Future[4]. PAM offered to hold one of the next MCSD/MCSD SC Meetings in Naples, Italy.

18. ECOUNION noted that the Mediterranean context is not only subject to environmental and socio-economic pressures, but also to regional and external stability challenges. In this context, he added that the MSSD is a key tool that focuses also on actions, in complement to the policy dimension, to ensure concrete outcomes on the ground, with the support of all stakeholders.

19. MedCities highlighted the need to liaise and develop synergies with the Macro Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean that is being prepared, positioning UNEP/MAP, the MCSD and the MSSD as key contributors. As indicated in document UNEP/MED WG.625/3, the Secretariat has been following the developments and has already provided substantial input to the draft action plan of the Macro Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean which is being prepared by the Inter-Mediterranean Commission of the Conference of the Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), which is being proposed as new MCSD member under the category of Local Authorities.

20. IUCN-MED confirmed its committed to continue providing capacity development, promoting science activities, sustainable finance and governance tools, while stressing the importance of supporting local implementation which he considered that remains weak, further promote stakeholders' cooperation, keep implementing and upscaling the ecosystem-based and circular approaches, especially in conjunction with productive activities.

21. ESDF emphasized that more engagement of communities, civil society and stakeholders is needed, based on available best practices and projects, recognized regional and national networks and forums, as well as available funding. ESDF noted that, accordingly, it is important to use at a larger scale and replicate activities such as the WES-BCA (Water and Environment Support – Biodiversity and Climate Action) that has an important component on stakeholders' engagement.

22. COMPSUD noted that the MCSD must be upgraded and enhanced by the countries, by further implementing and promoting the MSSD, as well as by all stakeholders, including those representing Parliamentary initiatives. The MCSD, together with the MSSD, has proven to be a key cooperation tool also in difficult periods with conflicts, promoting dialogue and continued cooperation. To this end, the MCSD

[2] The European Ocean Pact - European Commission
[3] MED Dialogues
[4] Pact for the Future - United Nations Summit of the Future | United Nations

Members should further strengthen its role and upscale its ambitions, as a unique best practice at the global level. COMPSUD concluded that it is important to build on this added value.

23. Egypt underlined that the region is facing crucial challenges of different nature; however, it is also important to note that there are many opportunities, including those provided by cooperation frameworks as the MSSD. Egypt added that it is crucial to make further efforts to deliver the concrete positive message also to citizens, communities, NGOs and the private sector, including via the media and social media, and to ensure their broader awareness and engagement as implementers of the MSSD.

24. AFED noted that they continue implementing and developing sustainable development and environmental policies and actions in Arab countries, based on science and awareness. He added that AFED annual reports on environment remain one of the major sources to trigger changes on the sustainable development polices in the region. The last such report is related to the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and conflicts on sustainable development and environment in Arab countries and it stresses the need to enhance the cooperation in the Mediterranean in this rapidly changing global frame.

25. Cyprus informed that before the end of 2025 an event on SDGs is planned as well as an event on Oceans, specifically targeting the Mediterranean, during the first semester 2026 in the framework of the semester of the Cyprus Presidency of the EU Council. Cyprus added that cooperation with the MCSD is welcomed to promote these events at high level. Cyprus shared its concerns on the environment worrisome situation in the region, particularly on coastal erosion, plastic pollution, desertification and water scarcity, as well as in relation to socio-economic aspects.

26. Croatia suggested that the progress report should also include elements on “what did not work”, as for example regarding the flagship initiative on public procurement that has not been launched, and on the lessons learned, therefore providing a perspective on the needs related to MSSD and flagship initiatives implementation, as well as on improvements that can be done and on best practices that can be applied.

27. In complement to the activities implemented in the period June 2023 – May 2025 by the MCSD and described in the document UNEP/MED WG.625/Inf.3, the following MCSD Members provided additional information.

28. Greece briefly reported on the 9th Our Ocean Conference (OOC-9) hosted in Athens in April 2024 that included, as one of its thematic sessions, the “green transition in the Mediterranean”, to showcase globally the challenges and opportunities of our unique region. To organize this, Greece had closely collaborated with the UNEP/MAP Secretariat. Moreover, as the current chair of the Plan of Action for a Model Mediterranean Sea (PAMEx) Greece has:

- Organized, together with UNEP/MAP and PAMEx Secretariats and France, and chaired two PAMEx Steering Committees meetings, respectively in December 2024 and March 2025.
- Organized a side event at the Mediterranean Pavillion during the UNFCCC COP 29 (11-22, November 2024, Baku, Azerbaijan), and more recently, a dedicated event during UNOC-3, on the 10th of June in the framework of the Mediterranean Day
- In line with the commitments to the targets under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) at the global level and the European biodiversity goals, a Workshop will be organized by PAMEx in autumn 2025, for the exchange of successful approaches on how to improve the management and coverage of MPAs towards the 30x30 target in the Mediterranean.
- With regard to marine pollution, there is an effort to elaborate and support a coordinated Mediterranean input, to the extent possible, in the framework of the second part of the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5.2) for a global treaty on plastic pollution that be held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 5-14 August 2025.

- With regard to sustainable maritime transport, electrification of green hubs and the exploration of the potential of green shipping corridors are being promoted towards the reduction of emissions from the shipping sector in the region.

29. MedCities:

- Participated in the UNOC-3 special event on Ocean Rise and Coastal Resilience Coalition Summit[5], co-organized by the City of Nice and the Ocean Climate Platform. The Summit marked the official launch the Ocean Rise and Coastal Resilience Coalition which will support coastal cities by planning and implementing the transformations required to address sea level rise. 150 cities participated, committing to cooperate on actions for promoting adaptation and mitigation to climate change and promote resilience.
- Discussions continue with the municipality of Barcelona to organize an event to celebrate the Anniversary of the Barcelona Convention.

30. COMPSUD:

- The new project WES-BCA (Water and Environment Support – Biodiversity and Climate Action)[6] that will last until the end of 2027, includes a component of outreach and communication and there are many opportunities to cooperate on important areas, such as biodiversity, water, plastic, waste, etc. as well as on the flagship initiatives on promoting environmental governance (the Aarhus Convention), education, etc.

31. The Coordinator thanked the MCSD Members for sharing briefings on their work and thanked for the continuous commitment in implementing the MSSD at all levels, policy and operational, regional, national and local, highlighting that it is crucial to further promote exchange of best practices.

32. In relation to a specific point raised by MedCities, the Coordinator noted that in March she had an initial discussion with the Municipality of Barcelona and Barcelona Metropolitan Area to consider organizing a joint event related to the promotion of best practices in sustainable coastal cities management, in the framework of the promotion of the MSSD flagship initiatives 'Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award' and 'Mediterranean Network of Zero Net Cities'.

33. Plan Bleu/RAC presented the main developments of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, providing an overview on the progress and main concerns based on the outcomes of Dashboard indicators monitoring, as well as the perspectives for strengthening the Dashboard, including three new indicators (i.e. on surface temperature, plastic leakage and air quality) that are not yet part of the Dashboard, and ten core indicators developped based on current and new indicators, as detailed in the documents UNEP/MED WG.625/3, UNEP/MED WG.625/Inf.4 and UNEP/MED WG.625/Inf.5. Plan Bleu/RAC also explained the timeline for the update of the MSSD Dashboard and the revised list of indicators.

34. The Meeting appreciated the overview of the progress of the MSSD Dashboard, the further work developed on core indicators and on the potential new three indicators, stressing that the Dashboard needs to evolve in line with the updated MSSD and that the monitoring process of the MSSD is key to understand the actual and future progress of the Strategy. The meeting noted that indicators on climate change, water scarcity and plastic pollution are of primary importance as they monitor key challenges and pressures. The Meeting recommended utilizing the MSSD indicators not only to inform the policy level but also to inform the civil society and broader stakeholders on the evolution on main challenges in relation to sustainable development, so as to further promote their engagement and commitment and support their actions.

[5] UNOC 2025 Special Event: Ocean Rise and Coastal Resilience Coalition Summit | Department of Economic and Social Affairs
[6] WES-BCA | MIO-ECSDE

Agenda Item 4: Agenda Item 4: Evaluation of the 2016-2025 MSSD implementation

35. The Secretariat provided a short presentation of the 2016-2025 MSSD Final Evaluation delivered by an independent consultant in November 2024, as presented in working document UNEP/MED WG.625/4, highlighting the achievements, gaps and the recommendations for the MSSD update.

36. The Meeting welcomed the 2016-2025 MSSD Final Evaluation as a good assessment that has, inter alia, integrated well the inputs provided by the extended MCSD SC meetings held in 2024. Greece also noted that the recommendations of the evaluation have been embedded in the 2026-2035 MSSD, so that it soundly reflects the identified gaps in SGDs implementation in the region. It was noted with appreciation that the MSSD implementation final evaluation report recommends also to give due consideration to the priorities, initiatives and strategies at the EU level, like the EU Green Deal and its Climate Neutrality objective.

37. The Meeting recommended that in order for the MSSD to show its relevance to the countries and improve its implementation prospects at the national level, attention should be placed on some identified key gaps, notably the need to enhance outreach, visibility and communication activities to ensure a boarder and stronger engagement with multi-level stakeholders as well as the need to enhance the financial means of the MSSD in order to ensure concrete impact.

38. Tunisia reminded that the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism of National Strategies for Sustainable Development (SIMPEER) implemented in the past, is a good tool to integrate evaluation and assessment work and to support Contracting Parties.

39. As part of future evaluation processes, PAM proposed to consider having a questionnaire to be shared with the Parliaments of the Member States of PAM to gather information on the process of MSSD implementation from their perspective. He noted that this is linked to the work PAM is carrying out on the follow up of the implementation of the 2024 UN Pact for the Future, adding that the EU Commissioner for the Mediterranean is very committed in the process and has been PAM President for 4 years.

40. One participant also recommended, for the future, to consider including juridical indicators among the MSSD indicators to monitor how laws relevant to sustainable development are effectively implemented at national level.

41. The Coordinator stressed that the evaluation document mainly assesses the implementation of the Strategic Directions, Actions and flagship initiatives of the MSSD, updating the 2020 MSSD Mid-term Evaluation, while for the next evaluation exercise in 2029/2030, that will coincide with the end of the current SDGs implementation timeframe, it would be important to define a more elaborated evaluation approach and criteria that take into account also other elements of the MSSD, in complement to the MSSD implementation.

42. The Meeting acknowledged the achievements and the gaps identified by the MSSD Final Evaluation, welcomed the participatory approach of the evaluation method and approved the document.

Agenda Item 5: MSSD 2026-2035 and its flagship initiatives

a) MSSD 2026-2035

b) Flagship initiatives

43. The Coordinator introduced the work under Agenda Item 5, highlighting the extensive and inclusive consultation process undertaken for the preparation of the updated MSSD 2026-2035, that has been key to

successfully deliver this mandate and that has been made possible also thanks to the second voluntary financial contribution of France.

44. The President and the Coordinator thanked the MCSD Members for the continuous contribution and support to the MSSD update process and the substantive discussion held during the Thematic Ad Hoc MCSD Meeting (12-14 February 2025, Istanbul, Türkiye), and noted the concrete comments and suggestions submitted in writing to the Secretariat after the ad hoc Meeting in Istanbul and through the three technical Working Groups that have been set up to support the MSSD revision process. She stressed that the 21st MCSD Meeting had the pivotal task to discuss, further elaborate, finalise and validate the MSSD 2026-2035 and its flagship initiatives, as presented in working documents UNEP/MED WG.625/5, UNEP/MED, WG.625/5/Add.1 and UNEP/MED WG.625/6.

45. One MCSD member expressed concerns on the way their comments were incorporated in the text of the MSSD Strategic Direction 5.5 and following the consultation process to the advance version of the MSSD, in view of the discussion at the 21st MCSD Meeting. The Secretariat explained that all comments provided by this member were fully integrated in document UNEP/MED WG.625/5 as footnotes, while the updated text of the Strategic Direction 5.5 as proposed by this MCSD member is detailed in document UNEP/MED WG.625/5/Add.1, prepared after a bilateral meeting with this MCSD member where the issue was clarified.

46. After a detailed review of the draft MSSD and an interactive, productive and detailed discussion also to assess new proposals tabled during the Meeting especially with regard a well-structured and coherent MSSD with a higher number of targets and concrete related existing and measurable indicators, as well as on narrative and objectives so as to best reflect current challenges in the Mediterranean region, and after having reviewed the full list of MSSD flagship initiatives, the Meeting approved the MSSD 2026-2035 final draft including its flagship initiatives as attached Annex III to this Report, and recommended for its submission to the COP24, following an editorial finetuning of the document by the Secretariat, for its consideration and approval.

47. The Meeting acknowledged that the MSSD flagship initiatives are a key enabler for the implementation of the MSSD, therefore the Meeting recommended the MCSD Members to be further involved and support the implementation of the flagship initiatives, while reaching out to broader partners and stakeholders.

48. One MCSD member specified that the EU New Pact for the Mediterranean and the EU Ocean Pact have also a funding programmatic dimension, which is crucial to explore so as to support the implementation of the MSSD, and which is also linked to the Macro Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean.

Agenda item 6: Specific Issues

a) MCSD Membership for the Biennium 2026-2027

49. The Coordinator introduced the issue by explaining that based on the Reform of the MCSD and Updated MCSD Constitutive Documents (COP19 Decision IG.22/17)[7], the Secretariat launched in February 2025 the process to replace eleven Non-Contracting Party MCSD Members whose mandate expires at the end of 2025. To this end, the Coordinator thanked the MCSD Members for their support in mobilizing new stakeholders at regional and national level.

[7] 16ig22_28_22_17_eng.pdf

50. The Meeting thanked the MCSD Members that have completed their term, for the continuous commitment and active engagement in the work of the MCSD and MSSD implementation, supporting also flagship initiatives.

51. The Meeting appreciated the detailed presentation of the expressions of interest received. It was also agreed to provide some flexibility time to the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) to verify its interest to become a new MCSD Members under the category of Intergovernmental Organizations (IGO) with no need to reopen the procedure of the expressions of interest, given the important role of UfM in promoting sustainable development policies and initiatives in the region and considering that for the IGO category the Secretariat had received only one candidacy on two available seats.

52. Based on documents UNEP/MED WG.625/7 and UNEP/MED WG.625/7/Add.1, after the discussions whereby the proposed new member Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), withdrew in favor of the potential new member Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED) as NGOs Group representative, and based on the recommendations of the 26th Steering Committee of the MCSD held on 23 June 2025, the Meeting concluded to recommend the following candidates for the consideration of COP24 for a term of four years (2026-2029), as foreseen by the Reform of the MCSD and Updated MCSD Constitutive Documents:

- Local authorities Group
  a. Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)
  b. Fispmed Network, Sustainable development and the fight against poverty in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (FISPMED)

- Socio-economic Group
  a. Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA)
  b. UNIVERDE Foundation

- NGOs Group
  a. Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)
  b. Worldwide Fund for Nature - Mediterranean **(**WWF-MED)
  c. Oceanographic Institute of Monaco

- IGOs Group
  a. Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE)
  b. Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) ***(to be confirmed)***

- Parliamentarian Group[8]
  a. Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development (COMPSUD)
  b. Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)

53. Based on the above recommendations, the MCSD Membership for the Biennium 2026-2027 would be the following, pending endorsement by COP24 for the new Non-Contracting Party MCSD Members:

- Local authorities Group
  a. Med Cities
  b. Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), **new member**
  c. Fispmed Network, Sustainable development and the fight against poverty in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (FISPMED), **new member**

- Socio-economic Group

[8] Based on **COP22 Decision IG.25/3** and on the confirmation for interest of COMPSUD and PAM, the Meeting concluded to propose the renewal of the mandate of COMPSUD and PAM for another term of four years (2026-2029).

a. Fondation Mohammed VI pour la Protection de l'Environnement
b. Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA), **new member**
c. UNIVERDE Foundation, **new member**

- NGOs Group
  a. Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), **new member**
  b. Worldwide Fund for Nature - Mediterranean **(**WWF-MED), **new member**
  c. Oceanographic Institute of Monaco, **new member**

- Scientific Community Group
  a. Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC)
  b. Centre International de Droit Comparé de l'Environnement (CIDCE)
  c. Dr. Fatima Driouech (IPCC Working Group I, University Polytechnic Mohammed VI, Morocco)

- IGOs Group
  a. IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature
  b. Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), **new member**
  c. Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) **(to be confirmed)**

- Parliamentarian Group
  a. PA OSCE: Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
  b. Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development (COMPSUD)
  c. Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)

54. With the purpose to improve the process in the future, one MCSD member raised some concerns about the effective rotation of MCSD membership based on the election and re-election rules of the Reform of the MCSD and MCSD Constitutive Documents.

55. To this end he noted that the rotation rule is meant to introduce new stakeholders. In his views the situation where the same individuals represent different members for decades should be avoided. In case the MCSD or the Secretariat estimate that some non-Contracting Party Members are very important for the MCSD work and that they may benefit of permanent membership, the MCSD might decide to submit a draft proposal to the COP to address the matter.

56. The Secretariat thanked for raising the attention of the Secretariat and of the MCSD on these elements and for future consideration and discussion during the next biennium.

57. Slovenia addressed the role of youth and the importance within the MCSD and MSSD implementation process and proposed to invite representatives of youth to COP24, following the successful example of COP23, and to enhance their participation and contribution to the MCSD, upscaling the process that started at COP19. In this line, Greece and France proposed to include youth organizations in the updated MCSD membership.

58. The Secretariat, noting the importance of Women and Youth involvement in sustainable development issues in the Mediterranean, referred to the proposal to increase the MCSD non-Contracting Party Members to include Women and Youth organizations, included in document UNEP/MED WG.625/7. The Secretariat specified that the selection criteria of the updated MAP Partners policy[9] will be used. The Secretariat added that it will be proposed to COP24 to update the MCSD Constitutive Documents (COP19

[9] COP 23 Decision IG.26/2 on Governance

Decision IG.22/17), to include the new proposed categories and to update the reference to the most recent MAP Partners policy adopted at COP23.

59. The Meeting welcomed the proposal of the Secretariat to expand the category of the Non-Contracting Party Members of the MCSD for including regional and sub-regional organizations of Women and Youth working in the field of environment and sustainable development that meet the criteria of MAP Partnership in line with the relevant COP Decisions, bringing the total number of the MCSD Members to 42.

b) Sustainability Considerations in UNEP/MAP Programme of Work 2026-2027

c) Inputs for the 21st MCSD Meeting to COP 24

60. The Coordinator briefly introduced the Sustainability Considerations in UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget (PoW) 2026-2027 as presented in document UNEP/MED WG.625/7, and highlighted that the PoW 2026-2027 further enhances the sustainability dimension, also in view of preparing the next UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy 2028-2033.

61. The Coordinator explained that in addition to the MCSD and its SC meetings, the proposed PoW 2026-2027 suggests supporting the ownership and capacity building of Contracting Parties in integrating MSSD objectives and actions within National Sustainable Development Strategies through a needs' analysis and capacity building online regional workshops, as well as to promote outreach and regional synergies, funding opportunities and enhanced partnership of MSSD flagship initiatives.

62. The Meeting acknowledged the Sustainability Considerations in UNEP/MAP Programme of Work 2026-2027 and agreed to delegate to the MCSD SC the task of elaborating a text on the ambitions and vision of the MCSD on Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean Region, to be embedded in the Ministerial Declaration of the COP24. It was agreed that the MCSD SC, after elaborating the first draft of the input of the MCSD to the COP24 with the support of the Secretariat, will share it with the MCSD Members and the final version will be submitted to COP24.

63. It was agreed that the President of the MCSD will be invited to attend the MAP Focal Point Meeting to present MCSD's input for the COP 24 Ministerial Session and Declaration as well as to the COP24 to present the work of the MCSD and the MSSD Draft Decision together with the Secretariat.

64. Greece suggested that the COP24 Declaration could largely built on the recent the UNOC-3 Declaration of the Environment Ministers of the Mediterranean adopted in Nice, on 10 June, and that the COP24 Ministerial Session and Declaration could provide a Mediterranean input to the UNEA 7 (Nairobi, 8-12 December), that will take place just after COP24 on the theme "Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet".

d) 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas

65. The Secretariat reminded that the main elements for the update of the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework (RCCAF) have been explained and briefly discussed during the Thematic Ad Hoc MCSD Meeting (Istanbul, Türkiye, 12-14 February 2025). Related comments provided by MCSD members during the Meeting in Istanbul were taken into due account, in drafting the updated RCCAF. Some members particularly stressed that since the MSSD 2026-2035 gives due emphasis on climate change, especially adaptation, the updated RCCAF should be such so as to assist Contracting Parties to also implement related targets and activities of the MSSD, primarily under Objective 1, Address climate change with emphasis to adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority.

66. In order the ensure a strong consultative process and thanks to the voluntary financial contribution of France, on 8-9 July a regional meeting was arranged to be held in Istanbul, Türkiye, to discuss and approve the draft RCCAF 2026-2035 before its submission to the MAP Focal Points Meeting and COP24.

67. The MCSD welcomed the work done for the update of the RCCAF and encouraged the active participation by Climate Change experts designated by the MAP Focal Points to attend the Regional Meeting of 8-9 July 2025.

Agenda Item 7: Next Meeting of the MCSD

68. The MCSD decided that the next Meeting will be held in May/June 2027 and encouraged its Members to host the Meeting.

Agenda Item 8: Any Other Matters

69. The Meeting did not raise any other matter for discussion.

Agenda Item 9: Conclusions and Recommendations

70. The 21st Meeting of the MCSD agreed on the draft Conclusions and Recommendations, which are presented in their final form in Annex IV to the present report.

Agenda Item 10: Closure of the Meeting

71. In their closing remarks, the President and the Coordinator congratulated the MCSD Members for the pivotal achievement of the Meetings, that demonstrated once more their commitment in strengthening sustainable development paths in the region, with the MSSD being the key reference framework, highlighting its vision and concrete actions.

72. The President of the MCSD closed the meeting at 18:15 on Thursday 26 June 2025.

Annex I
List of Participants

21st Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)
Corinth, Greece, 24-26 June 2025

List of Participants

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Annex II

Agenda of the 21st Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)

Agenda

Agenda Item 1 **Opening of the Meeting**

Agenda Item 2 **Organizational Matters**
a) Election of the Steering Committee
b) Adoption of the Provisional Agenda
c) Organization of Work

Agenda Item 3 **Report by the Coordinator on Sustainable Development Activities for the period June 2023 – May 2025**
a) MSSD Flagship Initiatives
b) Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard

Agenda Item 4 **Evaluation of MSSD 2016-2025 implementation**

Agenda Item 5 **MSSD 2026-2035 and its flagship initiatives**
a) MSSD 2026-2035
b) Flagship initiatives

Agenda Item 6 **Specific Issues**
a) MCSD Membership for the Biennium 2026-2027
b) Sustainability Considerations in UNEP/MAP Programme of Work 2026-2027
c) Inputs for the 21st MCSD Meeting to COP 24
d) Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF)

Agenda Item 7 **Next Meeting of the MCSD**

Agenda Item 8 **Any Other Matters**

Agenda Item 9 **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Agenda Item 10 **Closure of the Meeting**

Annex III
Approved 2026-2035 Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)

Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Sustainable development seeks to address the needs of current and future generations, utilizing natural resources and ecosystems in ways that preserve and sustain them, while further accelerating the decarbonization process, and ensure equitable access to them in the present and the future. It sets the framework for securing viable and lasting development and decent livelihoods for all, which are particularly important considerations in the current challenging Mediterranean socio-economic context.

2. The Strategy takes into account the outcomes of the **United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)** which put particular focus on the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN Resolution on the **Pact for the Future**[10], that reaffirms the commitment to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs and urgently calls for accelerating progress towards achieving the Goals.

3. The Strategy equally takes into account the **UNGA Resolution 76/296 of July 2022**, **"Our Ocean, Our Future, Our Responsibility"**, which highlights that its goals can also be successfully **applied at regional level**, the **2024 UNEA 6, UNEP/EA.6/Res.15** on Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution, scale-up means of implementation to enhance capacity to deliver ocean-related SDGs, as well as the **United Nations' Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030**[11] with its vision 'The science we need for the ocean we want'.[12]

4. The Strategy embeds, inter alia, the commitments and targets stemming from the **2015 UN Paris Agreement,** the **2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF),** the **European Green Deal,** the **International Maritime Organization's Strategy for reducing GHG emissions from ships**, the **Post-2020 SAPBIO**[13] **and other UNEP/MAP policies adopted after 2016, including Programmes of Measures to achieve Good Environmental Status of Mediterranean Sea and Coast.**

4. bis. The revised MSSD is being endorsed in 2025, an important milestone year both at the global as well as at the regional Mediterranean level for the protection, conservation and sustainable use of marine environment and its resources: it 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 achievement of SDG 14; the activation of implementation of numerous concrete new commitments with secured financing, by a wide array of stakeholders, submitted at the preceding 9th Our Ocean Conference (OOC-9, Athens, Greece, 15-17 April 2024); the [likely] entry into force 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); the 50 years anniversary of UNEP/MAP and the 30 years of the Post Rio Barcelona Convention, that culminated with the Ministerial Declaration renewing their commitment for a sustainable Mediterranean, and their remarkable achievements and unique institutional role in the protection and preservation of the Mediterranean Sea and its sustainable development; the EU Ocean Pact and the [upcoming] New Pact for the Mediterranean, providing integrated frameworks to strengthen policy coherence and a thriving blue economy for the Mediterranean region; 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; and, finally, the 30 years anniversary of the establishment of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), the advisory body of UNEP/MAP for integrating environmental considerations into socioeconomic policies and promoting sustainable development in the Mediterranean, responsible for the elaboration of the MSSD.

4. ter. These milestone achievements reflected in the MSSD [2026-2035] reaffirm the strong commitment and vision towards sustainability and acceleration of the green transition in the region, through the constructive collaboration of all stakeholders.

5. Sustainable development is of key importance for the Mediterranean: it is a closed sea, in which water

[10] Resolution A/RES/79/1 adopted by the General Assembly on 22 September 2024
[11] https://www.unesco.org/en/decades/ocean-decade
[12] Comment of Mohammed VI Foundation
[13] Decision IG.25/11 on the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO)

renewal is limited by the narrow connection to the ocean, and therefore particularly sensitive to pollution. In addition, its mild climate makes it home to a large diversity of ecosystems and species. The Mediterranean is also subject to considerable pressures. With its rich history and exceptional natural and cultural landscapes, its coasts accounted for 30 per cent of global tourist arrivals in 2011, while in previous years the figure had reached more than 35 per cent. The Mediterranean is the first world tourist destination with 360 million tourists in 2020 with a forecast to reach 500 million by 2030 (UNWTO, 2019), largely concentrated from June to September and on the coast. Approximately half of the 2017 arrivals -170 million - are in Mediterranean coastal areas, aggravating the concentration of human-made pressures in coastal zones, particularly during the summer season. Moreover, the Mediterranean region hosts 26 million cruise passengers/year[14].

6. At the same time, international tourism receipts reached 190 billion Euros, representing approximately 26 per cent of the global total. Urban agglomerations on the Mediterranean coasts, along with tourist infrastructure, have resulted in the development of large and mega-cities[15], with consequent pressures from the rising population levels and the accumulation of economic activities in a particularly fragile environment Mediterranean coastal and sea products and services, the agricultural products, as well as Mediterranean diets, have a global reputation, but depend entirely on the sustainability of coastal and marine resources and rural landscapes, and decent working conditions. Global shipping routes through the Mediterranean make the density of maritime traffic exceptional for a semi-closed sea. The recent surge of interest in the commercial exploitation of hydrocarbons and minerals under the Mediterranean seabed also poses increased risks for the Mediterranean environment.

7. Significant discrepancies in development levels and living standards between countries, together with the conflicts in the region, which are already negatively affecting investment and development, pose also challenges for envisaging a sustainable future of the Mediterranean basin. The fragility of the region is further aggravated by its sensitivity to climate change: in its Sixth Assessment Report[16], the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that "during the 21st century, climate change is projected to intensify throughout the region. Air and sea temperature and their extremes (notably heat waves) are likely to continue to increase more than the global average (high confidence)". Over the last three decades, marine heatwaves (MHWs) in the Mediterranean Sea have caused mass-mortality events in various marine species, and critical losses for seafood industries. In the future, MHWs may undermine many benefits and services that Mediterranean ecosystems normally provide, such as food, maintenance of biodiversity, and regulation of air quality[17].

8. The Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change MedEcc) have confirmed that due to global and regional trends in the drivers, impacts of Climate Change will be exacerbated in the coming decades, especially if global warming exceeds 1.5 to 2°C above the pre-industrial level. Significantly enhanced efforts are needed in order to adapt to inevitable changes, mitigate change drivers and increase resilience[18].

9. The aim of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development [2016-2035] [2026-2035] is to provide a strategic policy framework, built upon a broad consultation process, for securing a sustainable future for the region. The rationale behind the Strategy is the need to accelerate the sustainable development of the region, by equally tackling interlinked key challenges as climate change, biodiversity protection[19] and green transition, by harmonizing the interactions between socio-economic and environmental goals, in line with the SDGs and Agenda 2030 to adapt international commitments to regional conditions, to guide national sustainable development strategies and to stimulate regional cooperation between stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable development. The Strategy is underpinned by the conviction that investment in the environment and steady progress towards decarbonization is the best way to secure long-term, sustainable job creation and socio-economic development, and an essential vehicle for the achievement of social and economic objectives. For this reason, the Strategy focuses on addressing cross-cutting issues that lie in the

[14] 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers (SoED 2020)
[15] The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in its 2018 "World Urbanization Prospects" report defines megacities as urban agglomerations with over 10 million inhabitants
[16] Sixth IPCC Synthesis Report (AR6) was released on 20 March 2023
[17] 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report
[18] First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) on "Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future", MedECC, 2020
[19] Comment by EcoUnion

interface between environment and development. It addresses issues across sectoral, institutional and legal boundaries, emphasizing the interlinkages between environmental issues and economic and social challenges, rather than specific economic sectors such as tourism or agriculture. The Strategy is also expected to lead to synergies being forged between the work of important national and regional players and stakeholders, by providing a commonly-agreed framework, thereby leading to increased efficiency in the implementation of sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

10. In this framework, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has a pivotal cross cutting role, therefore integrating ESD into strategic planning and community-based initiatives is crucial to support understanding, resilience and sustainable practices of all stakeholders, including citizens, towards adaptation to climate change, marine conservation, sustainable urban development, and green economic models in the Mediterranean region.[20]

1.1. Background

11. At the 12th Conference of the Contracting Parties to Barcelona Convention in Monaco in November 2001, in line with the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention decided to prepare a Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

12. The Strategy 2005-2015 was developed as a result of a consultation process that mobilized Mediterranean stakeholders, including Governments and civil society through the participation of non- governmental organizations and key experts and adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in 2005 at their 14th meeting in Portoroz, Slovenia. The 2016-2025 Strategy has been formulated taking into account the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which put particular focus on the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and included an agreement to draft Sustainable Development Goals.

13. The need for the Strategy remains strong today, as while the new global and regional context has changed significantly and the pressures and challenges are even more pronounced. At the same time, under the Barcelona Convention new regional instruments, voluntary[21] and legally binding measures have been developed and are under implementation to address these pressures.

Mandate for the review of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development

14. In light of the outcomes of Rio+20, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention requested, at their 18th Ordinary Meeting held in Istanbul, Turkey, in December 2013, that a review of the Strategy be launched (Decision IG.21/11), with a view to submitting a new strategy for consideration and adoption by the Contracting Parties at their 19th meeting, to be held in February 2016 in Greece. The Decision emphasizes the importance of synergies with the global Sustainable Development Goals process, in order to ensure coherence between global and Mediterranean regional objectives and targets, while allowing for regional innovation and specificities.

15. The 23rd meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP23) of 5-8 December 2023, Portoroz, Slovenia, mandated the Secretariat to update the 2016-2025 MSSD in order to effectively implement the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and its SDGs at the regional level, seeking to amend current unsustainable trajectories and place the region on alternative pathways to sustainability and resilience, thus accelerating the progress towards achieving Good Environmental Status[22].

Assessments of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development [2016-2025] [2026-2035]

16. The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development draws upon the findings of four assessments carried out to inform the review process, the first focusing on implementation between 2005 and 2010, and the other ones addressing the influence of the regional strategy on national strategies for sustainable development and the implementation of the two MSSD cycles.

[20] Comment of Cyprus
[21] Comment by EcoUnion
[22] COP23 Ministerial Declaration (UNEP/MED IG.26/L.3)
https://cop23-slovenia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/23ig26_L3_eng_portoroz-ministerial-declaration.pdf

17. In 2009, the MAP Secretariat carried out a review and assessment of national strategies for sustainable development in the Mediterranean, in order to "provide an overall assessment of the actions and initiatives carried out so far by the Mediterranean countries for sustainable development and hence allow for a better appreciation of the state of play". It concluded that the Strategy has played a role more at the regional level, however, it noted that the MAP initiative to assist in the preparation of national strategies was worthwhile and had been embraced by a number of countries.
~~a)~~

~~17.~~18. In 2011, an assessment of the implementation of the Strategy 2005-2015 was carried out five years after its adoption, which offered a number of useful conclusions related to the emphasis on emerging priorities, such as climate change adaptation and the green economy, on the need to elaborate tangible targets and indicators, the reinforcement of the governance framework, as well as the opportunities for synergies with other programmes, organizations and initiatives [23].

~~18.~~19. In addition, the assessment also reported that at a national level-the entity responsible for coordinating the formulation and implementation of sustainable development strategies faced challenges in providing leadership and cross-government support.

~~19.~~20. Both the 2019 MSSD Mid-Term Evaluation and the 2024 MSSD Final Evaluation concluded that the MSSD has brought concrete learnings and best practices, including the flagship initiatives, that could significantly upscale the implementation of the Strategy. The two Evaluations also recognized that additional efforts related to its monitoring, means of implementation[24] and capacity building actions need to be undertaken to further implement the Strategy at regional, national and local level, to achieve the identified targets and to deliver the SDGs. In order to tackle the gap between policy vision and implementation processes, a more effective participatory process of stakeholders is to be promoted, as well as a more operational integrated approach among the different Strategic Directions, Action and Flagship Initiatives under the same MSSD Objectives and among Objectives. Breaking down fragmentation and achieving the deep transformative changes requires better connecting SDG-14 (Life bellow water) with the other SDGs, and focusing on synergies between climate action and sustainable development, providing win-win solutions, and minimizing trade-offs. In particular SDG-13 (Climate Action) is a lever to achieve the SDG-14 in Mediterranean as the region is a climate hot-spot. In addition, adaptation and mitigation actions planned by countries to strengthen the resilience of coastal and marine areas, contribute to the achievement of other MSSD objectives/SDGs, in particular SDGs 15 (Land), 6 (Water and Sanitation), 7 (Energy), 8 (Sustainable economic growth), 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), 11 (Cities and Infrastructure) and SDG 12 (Consumption and Production).
In complement ownership and contribution of the MSSD by regional and national stakeholders also outside the UNEP/MAP system and partners is essential, as an effective framework for cooperation effectively supporting the achievement of the SDGs in the region.
The Strategy builds on and enhances strong and coherent interlinkages between all SDGs, thus ensuring an integrated and holistic approach that takes into account the overall integrity and inclusive approach of Agenda 2030[25]. Financing the MSSD, improving its governance, outreach and coordination with regional and national stakeholders are also aspects that require further attention in order to ensure a concrete impact.

1.2. The Mediterranean Region

~~20.~~21. With its long history, its rich natural and cultural heritage, the Mediterranean Sea is a meeting point between three continents: Africa, Asia and Europe. Surrounded by 21 countries, it is the world's largest semi-closed sea.

Rich natural and cultural resources

[23] UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.358/4: http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications- opinion-files/7166.pdf
[24] Comment by EcoUnion
[25] Comment by Greece

~~21.~~22. Encompassing seven marine eco-regions, 75 coastal hydrological basins, and 224 coastal administrative regions, the Mediterranean Sea occupies a basin of almost 2.6 million km², has a coastline of 46,000 km, with an average water depth of approximately 1,500 m. The riverine systems that are the main source of nutrients and their related human activities have a significant impact on the health of the Mediterranean Sea.

~~22.~~23. The Mediterranean Sea is home to a large share of the world's marine biodiversity, but it is also the victim of decades of unsustainable use, despite the efforts for effective management. it also suffers most from the impacts of climate change, warming 20% faster than the rest of the world according to the MedECC[26], thus, it holds the highest percentage of threatened marine habitats, including 21% vulnerable and 11% endangered on the EU28 Red List.

~~23.~~24. The Mediterranean Sea hosts a very high percentage of the world's marine biodiversity and recognized as one of the 25 top global biodiversity hotspots. The peculiar geographical setting of the sea makes it very vulnerable to various anthropogenic pressures, such as overfishing, heavy maritime traffic, and land-based pollution, including the diffusion of non-native invasive species.

~~24.~~25. Home to 17,000 species of fauna and flora representing respectively 7.5% and 18% of the world's marine flora and fauna, the Mediterranean Sea is a hotspot of biodiversity in an area covering less than 1 per cent of the world's oceans and less than 0.3 per cent of its volume. The species diversity of the Mediterranean, although unevenly distributed between the eastern and western basins, is higher than in most other regions of the world with a large number of endemic species and critical levels of habitat loss, due to the geological history of this sea, its close communication with the Atlantic and its position at the junction of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa which make it a melting pot of biodiversity. Non-indigenous species (NIS) are increasingly present in the Mediterranean Sea generating significant changes in the fauna and flora composition, mainly in the eastern Mediterranean [27].

~~25.~~26. The Mediterranean region is home to some of the oldest human settlements in the world giving it unique cultural heritage and cultural landscapes. This has forged, over thousands of years, strong bounds among the people of the region and given added meaning to the sense of belonging to the Mediterranean. Despite their diversity, the regional identity of the Mediterranean countries has been strengthened by centuries of commerce and communication. It is still one of the world's busiest shipping routes, that constitutes an important transit and trans-shipment area for international shipping, as well as a realm for Mediterranean seaborne traffic (movement between a Mediterranean port and a port outside the Mediterranean) and short sea shipping activities between Mediterranean ports, and hosting 17% of the world's oil tanker capacity. Despite covering less than 1% of the world's oceans, the Mediterranean Sea accounted for more than a fifth (21-22%) of global shipping activity measured by the annual number of port calls, and around 9% of the annual container port throughput in recent years[28]. Shipping contributes around 2.6% of total global greenhouse gas emissions, a figure that could more than triple by 2050. This would represent 23% growth from 2015 to 2035. Implementing and promoting the Mediterranean SOx Emission Control Area[29], effective as of May 2025, engaging in the process for the designation of the Mediterranean as a whole as Nitrogen oxides emission control area (NECA), and decarbonation is crucial.

Mediterranean coastal zones: A vital interface between land and sea

~~26.~~27. The Mediterranean coastal zones form a crucial interface between land and sea. They have historically been densely populated, hosting extensive infrastructure and activities that have progressively intensified, leading to significant environmental impacts. As hubs for human activity, including tourism, fishing, and trade, these coastal zones are integral to the region's economy while facing pressures from urbanization and environmental degradation. These areas serve as transition zones, where the land meets the ocean, which drives changes in landforms, biodiversity, and the distribution of resources. Human activity along coasts further intensifies these

[26] MedECC 1st Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)

[27] 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report

[28] 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report

[29] On 15 December 2022 the 79th session of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 79) adopted the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter (Med SOx ECA), with effect from 1 May 2025, to further limit air pollution from ships, pursuant to Annex VI to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL).]

land-sea interactions, impacting the balance of these sensitive regions.

~~27.~~28. It is estimated that approximately one third of the Mediterranean population is concentrated in its coastal regions, whereas 70% of the population lives either in cities - which are mostly coastal- or in coastal hydrological basins and 30% in rural areas knowing that rurality in the southern shore of the Mediterranean is more pronounced than in the North[30]. According to Plan Bleu the Mediterranean hosts 7% of the world population corresponding to 512 million inhabitants in 2018 in the 22 riparian countries with 314 million inhabitants in the South and East and 198 million in the North. In 2021, the population of the Mediterranean countries reached 532 million, increasing by close to 20 million people in only 3 years between 2018 and 2021. It reaches 65 per cent for the southern countries of the region, with around 120 million inhabitants. The population of the riparian states grew from 276 million in 1970 to 532 million in 2021 and is predicted to reach 630 and 690 million by 2050[31]. However, the distribution of population between the Mediterranean countries of the European Union and the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries has changed dramatically over this period: in 1960, the Southern and Eastern countries represented 41 per cent of the total population, while today this figure is 60 per cent. This population growth is associated with a significant increase of the urban population, which grew from 48 per cent in 1960 to 67 per cent in 2010 and 70% in 2020[32].

Socio-economic trends

~~28.~~29. Mediterranean countries' economy grew less than the world average between 2000 and 2017, leading to a decreasing share of the Mediterranean world's gross domestic product (GDP) in the world GDP: from 12.9% in 2000 to 11% in 2010 and 9.8% in 2017[33]. The GDP growth rates in the south and east Mediterranean countries are higher than those of the North Mediterranean countries. However, they are considered low when compared to the population growth rates, as the demographic growth is still high in the southern Mediterranean countries. In 2021, the average income per capita in the South and East Mediterranean countries (10 000$) is more than 4 times lower than the average income in the North Mediterranean countries (40 000$). The share of the Mediterranean GDP in the world GDP is decreasing from 14.1% in 2000 to 12.6% in 2010, 11.3% in 2018 and 8% in 2021. This value is to consider with attention because the GDP per inhabitant has increased since 2018 for all of the Mediterranean countries (except for Lebanon, Libya and The Syrian Arab Republic) but less than the other countries in the world[34]. The economic growth in the Southern and Eastern countries was accompanied by significant improvements in key social indicators as represented by the Human Development Index.

~~29.~~30. Traditional resource-based activities (i.e. fisheries, aquaculture forestry, agriculture, and primary industries), secondary industries (e.g. shipping, food processing, housing and construction) and services (e.g. shipping and tourism) will continue to dominate economic development in the Mediterranean coastal regions. Emergent resource-based activities (i.e. marine and deep-sea mining of non-living resources, renewable energies, underwater cables and pipelines, blue biotechnology) have to be taken into account as a source for job creations but also as possible drivers of impacts on the environment. There is a need to anticipate the development of these emerging and fast-growing new activities[35].The potential for economic opportunities in coastal cities remains a strong attractive force, attracting populations from the hinterland and fuelling immigration from often economically depressed rural areas. These new coastal cities' inhabitants will demand employment, food, water, energy, housing, and other goods and services, exerting further pressure on the coastal ecosystems and environments, and therefore presenting a substantial development challenge for the Mediterranean.

~~30.~~31. Within the region, poverty continues to afflict many: the Arab Forum for Environment and Development reports that it affects 65 million people in the Middle East and Northern Africa.16 Economic insecurity is aggravated by high unemployment rates in the general population, which increase among youth. Sharp income disparities still exist among countries, and in some cases growth figures conceal deterioration in regenerative natural capital.17 That raises questions about the ability of Mediterranean economies to create the millions of new jobs projected to be required to accommodate new entrants into the

[30] 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers (SoED 2020)
[31] MED2050 Report: Mediterranean Foresight Report for 2050
[32] 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers (SoED 2020)
[33] 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers (SoED 2020)
[34] MSSD dashboard indicator 3, 2023
[35] 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report

labor force, while keeping current unemployment rates stable. The impacts of poverty and unemployment have contributed to social marginalization, which is further compounded by income disparities, and gives rise to social and political instability. Demands for change across the Mediterranean reveal that the mounting economic, social, and environmental strains and the resultant implications on livelihood security have become unsustainable. In many countries it is because sustainable development planning was absent that civil and armed conflict has arisen. Similarly, at the regional level, current and emerging socio-economic and political challenges and their impacts remain major concerns for sustainable development.

~~31.~~32. Despite demographic and geopolitical challenges, human development in the Mediterranean region has generally improved over the past decade. The gap between northern and southern/eastern shores has narrowed, though it remains. Education, especially in Southern and Eastern countries, has seen significant progress, with girls' enrollment now matching or exceeding boys at all levels. However, women's participation in the workforce remains low due to work-life balance issues, gender discrimination, and sociocultural barriers. Youth unemployment is also a significant concern, often three times higher than national averages.

~~32.~~33. Over the past two decades, the share of agriculture and industry in GDP has declined in favor of services, which now account for over half of national GDP in many countries. Mediterranean economies still depend heavily on unsustainable material consumption and carbon emissions, despite some improvements. High import dependency, particularly for fossil fuels and cereals, combined with trade deficits and non-diversified economies, limits resilience. Government debt has also risen, exceeding 100% of GDP in one-third of Mediterranean countries, posing risks to financial sustainability and public investment in the environment. At the regional level, current and emerging socio-economic and political challenges and their impacts remain major concerns for sustainable development.

~~33.~~34. In recent decades, production and consumption patterns in the Mediterranean have significantly changed due to demographic growth, urbanization, and rising living standards, leading to increased resource consumption and environmental degradation. The demand for processed food, manufactured goods, and coastal tourism has contributed to food loss, packaging waste, and the depletion of vital resources like water and energy. This situation is exacerbated by inefficient industrial processes and inadequate waste management. In 2016, the Barcelona Convention's Contracting Parties adopted the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), recognizing the need to change consumption patterns to protect marine and coastal environments[36].

1.3. Formulating the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-[2035] [2026-2035]

~~34.~~35. The update of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) is a composite process that combines different interrelated steps and required the development of a number of parallel activities, including the outcome of two independent evaluation process of the status of the implementation of the MSSD for the period 2016-2025. The MSSD formulation process was inclusive and led by the members of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable development and inputs provided by experts through the establishment of technical groups on Circular Economy, Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Ocean Economy/Sustainable Finance.

[36] 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers (SoED 2020)

2. MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2016 [2035] [2026-2035]: OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND ACTIONS

~~35.~~36. The aim of this Strategy is to provide a strategic policy framework to secure a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region and efficiently deliver SDGs at regional and national level. To this end, the rationale behind the Strategy is the need to harmonise the interactions between socio-economic and environmental goals, in line with the SDG and 2030 Agenda to adapt international commitments to regional conditions, to guide national sustainable development strategies, and to stimulate regional cooperation between stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable development. In this respect, sustainable development translates into the need to take into account environmental, social and economic goals in decision-making at all scales and across all sectors. The Strategy is underpinned by the conviction that investment in the environment, decarbonization, climate resilience and circular, green and blue economy is the best way to protect Mediterranean sea and coasts and secure long-term, sustainable job creation and socio- economic development, and an essential vehicle for the achievement of social and economic objectives. Education for Sustainable Development as a Cross-Cutting enabler supports all MSSD objectives.[37]

~~36.~~37. The Strategy is built around the following vision:
A prosperous, climate resilient, and peaceful Mediterranean region in which people enjoy a high quality of life and where sustainable development takes place within the carrying capacity and in the limit of acceptable change of biologically diverse healthy, productive, conserved, restored wisely used and effectively managed ecosystems.

~~37.~~38. This is achieved through common objectives, shared actions, strong involvement of all stakeholders, cooperation, solidarity, equity and participatory governance.

~~38.~~39. This vision is encapsulated in the subtitle of the Strategy, which is '***Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social well-being and economic development***'.

~~39.~~40. A set of guiding principles also informs the Strategy: the importance of an integrated approach to environmental and development planning; an openness to a plurality of future development models; a balanced approach to territorial development; the precautionary and polluter pays principles; and the Do No Significant Harm Principle (DNSH); a participatory approach to policy and decision-making; the management of demand in order to reduce consumptions; the importance of evidence-based policy; the reconciliation of long- and short-term for planning and evaluation (at least over a few decades); transparency, accountability[38] and, the partnership between the MAP system and other international and regional organizations.

~~40.~~41. The Strategy focuses on addressing cross-cutting issues that lie in the interface between environment and development. It is based on a set of cross-cutting themes that were chosen to provide scope for an integrated approach to address sustainability issues, as follows: Seas and coasts; Source to Sea; Natural resources, rural development and food; Water-Energy-Food -Ecosystem Nexus; Sustainable cities; Climate; Transition towards a green and blue economy; Governance.

~~41.~~42. The first four themes reflect a territorial approach, where complex sustainability issues can be addressed together: a concern over seas and coasts was a major outcome of Rio+20, as well as a cornerstone of the cooperation under the Barcelona Convention; the Source-to-Sea approach was highlighted in the Portoroz Ministerial Declaration of COP 23; rural areas provide a context for addressing a set of inter-related rural issues; and, cities were the theme of the Istanbul 18th Conference of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention in 2013. The four cross-cutting themes that follow are the Water-Energy-Food -Ecosystem Nexus, which is an integrated approach, very important for achieving the SDGs; climate change, which is a major sustainability issue from a global and regional perspective; the green and blue[39] economy, which provides a key link between the environment and the economy and is a major focus of the Rio+20 Summit; and governance, which emerged during the consultation as a key issue for implementing sustainability in the Mediterranean region. These themes have been used as a basis for formulating the six objectives of the

[37] Comment by Cyprus
[38] Comment by EcoUnion
[39] Comment by EcoUnion

Strategy, as follows:

1 Address climate change with emphasis to adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and[40] Transition as a priority
2 Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems[41]
3 Promote sustainable resource management especially waterfood security and systems through sustainable forms of rural development
4 Plan-and manage sustainable, resilient Mediterranean cities
5 Accelerate transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance
6 Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.

~~42.~~43. These objectives correspond closely to the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations in September 2015, as indicated in Table 1 below. Nevertheless, due to the cross-cutting nature of the objectives, almost all the Sustainable Development Goals are indirectly relevant to all the Strategy's objectives

Table 1. Linking the objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016 [2035] [2026-2035] to the Sustainable Development Goals

Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016 [2035] [2026-2035] objectives	**Sustainable Development Goals**
1 Address climate change with emphasis to adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and [42]Transition as a priority	7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all[43] 13. Take urgent action to mitigate climate change and its impacts
2 Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems	6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
3 Promote sustainable resource management, and food security through sustainable forms of rural development and food systems	2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
4 Plan and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities	6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all[44] 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation[45]

[40] Comment by PAM
[41] Comment by Malta: it is important to consider realistic timeframes for restoration. For such purpose the strategy should acknowledge the need to assess progress and revise the timelines accordingly
[42] Comment by PAM
[43] Comment by EcoUnion, Greece and Tunisia
[44] Comment by EcoUnion
[45] Comment by Greece

Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016 [2035] [2026-2035] objectives	**Sustainable Development Goals**
	11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns[46]
5 Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance	8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
6 Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development	5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries[47] 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.
7.Cross-cutting sustainable development goals related to social issues	1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all 8- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all[48] 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

The six objectives represent the backbone of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016 [2035] [2026-2035] Each objective covers a range of sustainability issues, as presented in Box 1:

Box 1. List of issues addressed by the six objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016- [2035] [2026-2035]

1. Address climate change with emphasis to adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority

- Scientific knowledge and tools on climate change not sufficiently accessible and used for decision- making
- The damage caused by climate change, including extreme events and long-term steady changes, increases in key vulnerable populations and economic[49] sectors
- Insufficient number of adaptation plans and accompanying capacities to implement them
- Growing trend of greenhouse gas emissions within and beyond the energy and industry sector
- Slow pace in emergence of climate-friendly societies due to limited access to best available technologies and alternative development practices
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation costs largely unmet at national and local levels,
- Untapped potential of Circular economy practices and Sustainable Business Models to foster climate change mitigation/adaptation
- Over-reliance on public funding and state-led initiatives
- Need to improve the understanding on the assessment process and communication on the progress made by Mediterranean countries in implementing their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).[50]
- Lack of a common Mediterranean energy strategy and need to improve energy cooperation
- Still poor dissemination, awareness-raising, and media communication on the issues and challenges of climate

[46] Comment by Greece
[47] Comment by Greece
[48] Comment by Tunisia
[49] Comment by EcoUnion
[50] Comment by Tunisia

change.[51]

- Disruption of water, food and energy access (WEFE nexus)[52]

2. Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems

Continued environmental degradation and increased risks from marine pollution and marine noise including from plastic pollution and Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)[53]

- Loss of biodiversity and introduction of Non-indigenous species
- Ecosystem fragmentation and degradation
- Unsustainable exploitation of living resources in ecological systems,
- Impacts from exploitation of non-living marine resources including hydrocarbons
- Incidental catches and collisions with threatened or endangered species and/or species in bad conservation
- Protected sensitive or vulnerable[54] areas at risk from insufficient spatial coverage, planning, management and funding
- Increased linear coastal urbanization resulting in inadequate protection and management of land, urban sprawl owing to illegal construction and gentrification of coasts, and unrestricted tourism development leading to loss of public and natural open spaces
- Increased coastal vulnerability to natural hazards such as flooding and erosion

3. Promote sustainable resource management, and food security through sustainable forms of rural development and food systems

Natural resources and ecosystem services

- Loss of biodiversity and local varieties of crops and indigenous breeds from:
  - Overexploitation or illegal use of water and other natural resources
  - Habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, and lack of appropriate valuation
  - Non-indigenous and invasive species
  - Genetically modified organisms and Intensive monocultures/single-crop farming[55]
  - Climate change
- Pollution of soil, water and air and extraction of limited natural resources[56]
- Degradation and fragmentation of terrestrial ecosystems, notably wetlands, forests, dunes, as well as use of non-regenerative practices Insufficient awareness of ecosystem services and their economic benefits from society, industries and policymakers, and lack of appropriate valuation
- Cross-border issues in the management of natural resources and livestock production

Rural development and food

- Need to promote circular approaches to the use of natural resources in food production especially in the use of water for irrigation
- Vulnerability of small producers to economic and climatic changes and natural resource scarcity
- Low provision of social services and infrastructure in certain rural areas
- Loss of agricultural land, erosion and desertification, coupled with an expanding rural exodus[57]
- Socio-economic inequalities affecting rural populations, particularly women and youth
- Logistical deficit at local, national and regional levels, including lack of access of local and small producers to land, water, credit, and markets
- Agricultural production and market controlled by large players, leaving limited access for small- scale producers and local products
- Loss of traditional know-how and aging farmers
- Insufficient collective organization and lack of participation of local communities in natural resource management
- Insufficient consideration of water, ecosystems, food and energy, in line with the WEFE nexus approach

[51] Comment by Tunisia
[52] Comment by EcoUnion
[53] Comment by PAM
[54] Comment by EcoUnion
[55] Comment by PAM
[56] Comment by EcoUnion
[57] Comment by Tunisia

4. Plan and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities
➢ Urban quality of life and health degraded by traffic congestion, noise, poor air quality, inadequate supply of sanitation and increased generation of urban waste and untreated urban wastewater ➢ Resilience reduced by natural and human-induced risks, particularly those triggered by climate change ➢ Unsatisfactory urban economic and social cohesion, especially in slums and informal urban settlements, which is further increased by regional territorial imbalances, resulting in rural migration to large cities that increases urban poverty ➢ Increased demand for energy, coupled with inefficient use of energy, and low usage of renewable energy sources ➢ Degradation of historic urban areas ➢ Increase circularity and reuse of construction and demolition waste as well as create more robust and resilient infrastructure, and raise awareness about the dangers represented by organized crime and toxic waste[58] ➢ Continued rise in waste generation and food waste due to growing population and increased consumption patterns ➢ Unsustainable consumption and production patterns that negatively impact energy consumption and transportation choices ➢ Low capacity of local authorities for youth sensitive, integrated forms of urban management, children and the elderly/disabled person.[59]

[58] Comment by PAM
[59] Comment by Tunisia

5. Accelerate Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance
➢ Socio-economic inequalities between and within countries and high unemployment in particular for youth and women ➢ Just Economic growth that does not take into account environmental, gender and social impacts, including living wages and fair employment conditions for all ➢ Unsustainable lifestyles based on high resource-consumption patterns and low recycling rates, limited consumer awareness and insufficient product information ➢ insufficient education and raising-awareness policies/strategies addressed the entire society for adopting sustainable consumption patterns and understanding the benefits of recycling and circular economy ➢ Infrastructure Limitations on existing waste management and recycling systems to handle the scale of circular economy initiatives, requiring significant investment and upgrade ➢ Difficult adoption of Circular Economy practices within the business and industry sector, especially for micro and small companies, due to higher initial investment costs and risk exposure ➢ Lack of financial incentives and policy support for businesses to adopt circular practices ➢ Environmentally harmful subsidies (EHS) and inefficient production facilities ➢ Investment flows financing unsustainable facilities and inefficient infrastructure ➢ Policy uncertainties increasing the risk of investments in green technologies and processes ➢ Need to enhance green financing instruments and appropriate-regulatory frameworks and economic mechanisms/ incentives as well as, to address the existence of harmful subsidies ➢ Wrong price/market signals and fiscal incentives not valuing intangible and natural capital and externalities ➢ A lack of reliable data to assess the environmental impacts and economic benefits of circular practices makes it challenging to promote and scale these initiatives effectively. ➢ Inefficient trade markets and cooperation at regional level ➢ Low level of regional economic competitiveness ➢ Lack of targeted policy measures aiming at developing sustainable business models that generate both socio-economic, gender-oriented and environmental benefits ➢ Lack of criteria that take due consideration of environmental, climate and in general sustainability objectives in the selection of public and private investments (green taxonomy) ➢ Relatively high dependence on natural resources for economic development ➢ Reduced incentive and weak support/guidance for young start-up researchers[60]
6. Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development
➢ Poor capacities for responding to emergencies, and poor understanding of the relationship between population flows and environmental sustainability ➢ Lack of both human and financial resources and competences within local authorities and local communities[61] ➢ Non adequate involvement of stakeholders, and consensus building mechanisms, including non-state actors' ones as youth and women, private sector and financial institutions ➢ Low level of participation and empowerment in decision-making at various levels ➢ Fragmentation of responsibility in different levels of governance and between sectors, and lack of decentralization ➢ Lack of coherence and synergies between policies at different levels of decision-making across sectors in the long-term and across borders (Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development - PCSD) ➢ Insufficient planning, management, implementation and monitoring of existing legal instruments ➢ Scientific knowledge and tools relevant for sustainable development not sufficiently accessible and used for decision-making Inadequate awareness, education, and research and innovation regarding the understanding of sustainable development challenges and opportunities ➢ Need to advance public trusteeship concepts in the existing instruments for better and more equitable governance and more effective and efficient public participation+ ➢ Insufficient levels of awareness among Members of National and International Parliaments of the importance of

[60] Comment by Tunisia
[61] Comment by EcoUnion

their role in fostering sustainable development practices and legislations[62]

- Insufficiency, unavailability of scientific knowledge and data and insufficient use for better informed policy making
- lack of coordination mechanisms and tools to ensure vertical and horizontal collaboration among different levels of government and among different sectors

~~43.~~44. A set of strategic directions has been formulated for each of the six objectives of the Strategy, in order to ensure that the relevant issues are addressed. Table 2 lists the strategic directions for each objective. Due to the cross-cutting nature of the objectives, there are interlinkages between the strategic directions, and the implementation of one strategic direction may synergistically affect the implementation of another. Further strategic directions and actions have been elaborated in Chapter 3, which focuses on ensuring implementation and monitoring of the Strategy. Education for Sustainable Development is critical and is embedded cross cuttingly in the MSSD.[63]

Table 2. Strategic directions under the objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016- [2035] [2026-2035]

Objective	Strategic direction
1. Address climate change with emphasis to adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority	**1.1:** Increase scientific knowledge, education, raise awareness, and develop technical capacities to deal with climate change and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems
	1.2: Accelerate the uptake of climate smart and climate resilient responses
	1.3: Leverage existing and emerging climate finance mechanisms, including international and domestic instruments, and enhance the engagement of the private and finance sectors
	1.4: Encourage institutional, policy, legal and legislative reforms and initiatives[64] for the effective mainstreaming of climate change responses into national and local development frameworks in all sectors
	1.5 Promote economy decarbonization energy transition and deployment of renewable energies
	1.6 Strengthen national and local capacities on the application of nature-based solution for climate change adaptation and mitigation
2. Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems	**2.1** Strengthen implementation, compliance and monitoring with regional requirements of regulatory and policy frameworks of the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention for coastal and marine management
	2.2 Promote balanced and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources
	2.3: Promote well connected ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures and nature-based solutions at national, transboundary and Mediterranean level and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss
3. Promote sustainable resource management, and food security through sustainable forms of rural development and food systems	**3.1:** Promote the circular/regenerative use, management and conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Natural Resources and ecosystems in the Mediterranean Region
	3.2: Promote conservation and use of indigenous or traditional plant varieties and domestic animal breeds, value traditional knowledge and practices in rural management decisions

[62] Comment by PAM
[63] Comments by Cyprus
[64] Comments by PAM

Objective	Strategic direction
	3.3: Promote inclusive and sustainable rural development, with a specific focus on poverty eradication, One Health[65], food security, women's empowerment and youth employment, including equitable and sustainable access to basic local services for rural communities
	3.4: Ensure access of local producers to distribution channels and markets, including the tourism market
4. Plan and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities	**4.1:** Apply holistic and integrated spatial planning processes and other related instruments, as well as improved compliance with respective rules and regulations, to increase economic, social and territorial cohesion and reduce pressures on the environment
	4.2: Encourage inclusive urbanization and strengthen capacities for participatory and integrated human settlement planning and management
	4.3: Promote the protection and rehabilitation of historic urban areas
	4.4: Promote sustainable production, use of sustainable products and effective waste management within the context of a more circular economy, as well as foster sustainable consumption patterns among citizens
	4.5: Promote urban spatial patterns and technological options that reduce the demand for transportation, improve urban air quality and stimulate sustainable mobility and accessibility in urban areas
	4.6: Promote green infrastructures and renewable energies and improve energy efficiency to contribute towards reducing the ecological footprint of the built environment
	4.7: Enhance urban resilience in order to reduce vulnerability to risks from natural and human-induced hazards including climate change
5. Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance	**5.1:** Create green, just and decent jobs for all, particularly youth and women, to eradicate poverty and enhance social inclusion
	5.2: Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, to support the shift towards circular economy approaches and sustainable business models
	5.3: Encourage innovation, public private partnerships[66] and sustainable solutions to advance towards the objectives of a just low-carbon, circular, green and blue economy
	5.4: Promote the integration of sustainability, circularity and climate change principles and criteria on the programming and evaluation frameworks of[67] public and private investment
	5.5: Promote an integrated financial ecosystem through a Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance aiming to foster the channeling of private and public capital into sustainable investments.
6. Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.	**6.1:** Enhance regional, sub-regional and cross-border dialogue and cooperation, including on emergency-preparedness
	6.2 Strengthen the role, awareness and capacities of sub-national and local governments/ municipalities and of National and Regional Parliaments[68] for implementing national and subnational sustainable development strategies and thus contribute to the achievement of SDG and MSSD objectives
	6.3: Promote the engagement of civil society, scientists, youth and women, financial institutions, private sector, local communities and other stakeholders in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive whole of society processes and integrity in decision-making
	6.4: Promote the implementation, and monitoring of the SD Strategies at all levels of government, considering synergies and tradeoffs between different policies and sectors, including intersectional management (WEFE NEXUS)

[65] Comment by PAM
[66] Comment by PAM
[67] Change proposed by Italy
[68] Comment by PAM

Objective	Strategic direction
	~~through~~ by improving[69] policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) based on whole of government approach, inter-ministerial coordination and multi-level government
	6.5: Promote education and research for sustainable development
	6.6: Strengthen regional capabilities for information management and enhance the promotion of evidence-informed policymaking and foresight

~~44.~~45. The strategic directions are complemented by actions to be taken at national and regional levels, which are accompanied by a broad indication of Responsible Actors, timeframes and indicators. Flagship initiatives are also identified, which demonstrate the vision of the Strategy in an exemplary way; these initiatives are indicative of a regional or (multi) national action that carries significant potential for results, demonstration and visibility.

~~45.~~46. A set of targets has also been developed for the Strategy, bearing in mind its focus on the interface between the environment and socio-economic development. The main source for the targets was the Sustainable Development Goals. The targets are summarised by objective in Table 3 below and appear in the Strategy under the relevant objective and strategic direction.

Table 3. Targets in the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016- [2035] [2026-2035]

~~46.~~47. The MSSD 2016- [2035] [2026-2035] aims at contributing to an ambitious set of targets through the implementation of its flagship initiatives and actions at regional, national and local scale.
Its targets are inspired by the global agenda for sustainability and SDGs of relevance for the Mediterranean Region, considering its specificities.

MSSD Objectives	Targets
Address climate change with emphasis to adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority	**Target 1**: By 2030, Contracting Parties to minimize the impact of climate change and Mediterranean Sea acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches, as well as investments on climate-resilient infrastructures, while minimizing negative and fostering positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity
	~~**Target 2 Option 1** By 2030 Contacting Patries have in place national climate change adaptation strategies~~ **Target 2**: ~~**Option 2**~~ By 2030 Contracting Parties should develop strategies that include information on climate change risks, its priorities, plans and actions to build adaptation and climate resilience
	Target 3: by 2030 Contracting Parties [to the Barcelona Convention] should develop and submit their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to contribute to limiting global warming to 1.5°C, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 43% and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050
	Target 4: By 2030, Contracting Parties will reach a minimum of 20% of renewable energy in their energy mix, by increasing the renewable energy share derived from renewable resources in total final consumption, thus encouraging shifting towards energy transition, including soil management and food systems transformation and building sectors

[69] Comment by Greece

Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems	**Target 5:** By 2030, Contracting Parties have ratified the Barcelona Convention Protocols and the appropriate legislative measures to implement them at the national level have been already taken
	Target 6: By 2030 Good Environmental Status of marine and coastal environment is maintained and enhanced through effective implementation of Ecosystem Approach and commitment under Barcelona Convention and its Protocols
	Target 7: By 2030, at least 30 per cent of the Mediterranean Sea is protected and conserved through well connected, ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, ensuring adequate geographical balance, and sustainably managed by applying ecosystem-based approaches including biodiversity and climate change-informed marine spatial planning, and by conducting environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments
	Target 8: By 2030 Contracting Parties shall ensure effective implementation of the legally binding measures adopted under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols on wastewater, marine litter, plastic pollution and under IMO International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Convention and its Annexes)
Promote sustainable resources management, especially water, food security and systems through sustainable forms of rural development	**Target 9:** By 2030, Mediterranean Countries [ensure that~~have~~] at least 75% of their population using safely managed drinking water services and at least 30% using safely managed sanitation in a multi-level context of water stress, competing demands and growing shortages, particularly for vulnerable populations and women. **Target 10:** By 2030, [~~Contracting Parties~~ Mediterranean Countries] ~~will~~ ensure that at least 90% of the population has access to affordable, safe, and nutritious food all year round, through the promotion of resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems, including local supply chains.
Plan and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities	**Target 11:** By 2030, all Mediterranean countries have substantially reduced waste generation through prevention, recycling and reuse, particularly by ensuring that at least 60% of municipal solid waste is sustainably recycled, composted or managed, including separate collection and material recovery, including biowaste, with emphasis on packaging waste and on the most environmentally damaging SUP products as a priority.
	Target 12: By 2035~~0~~, Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have adopted regulatory and policy frameworks with ambitious health-based standards for indoor and outdoor air quality ~~,~~ ~~i~~n line with the World Health Organization (WHO).
Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance	**Target 13:** By 2030, Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have in place effective regulatory and policy frameworks, including economic incentives, aimed at facilitating the development of sustainable business models that integrate circularity and eco-innovation principles in the green and blue economies, while contributing to the development of non-pollutant and socially inclusive economies, in line with the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan for the Mediterranean.
	Target 14: By 2035 Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have established sustainable finance frameworks that mobilize capital towards green and sustainable investments, while fostering collaboration among all stakeholders.
Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in	**Target 15:** By 2030, Contracting Parties/Mediterranean Countries have [~~institutional~~ formal] mechanisms in place to ensure subsidiarity and synergies between policies at different levels of decision-making and across sectors in the

support of resilience and sustainable development.	long-term and across borders thus enhancing policy coherence on sustainable development (PCSD), including involvement of stakeholders.
	Target 16 : By 2030, ensure that all learners, including the general public, acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
	Target 17: By 2035~~0~~, Mediterranean Countries~~Contracting Parties~~ have acceded to the Aarhus Convention.

~~47.~~48. The Strategy takes as a given the implementation of all national, regional and international obligations relevant to the Mediterranean, even if it does not explicitly mention them.

~~48.~~49. The actions proposed are aimed at providing guidance and inspiration, as they summarize the opportunities for developing national actions and regional collaboration within and outside the MAP system for the most effective implementation of the Strategy. It is understood that not all countries may have the necessity or the resources to undertake all the proposed national level actions. It may be preferable, in line with national planning procedures, to adapt the proposed actions to national needs. National actions should therefore serve as a reference framework to help countries design national policies to implement the strategic directions. For the purposes of the Strategy, which has a focus on the Mediterranean region, sub-national regional authorities are included under the term 'local authorities'.

Objective 1: Address climate change with emphasis to adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority

Vision and Actions

~~49.~~50. Addressing climate change is a priority for the Mediterranean. As highlighted in the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Mediterranean region, considered one of the world's major climate change hotspots, is highly vulnerable to the negative impacts of global warming.

~~50.~~51. Climate variability and change is already becoming increasingly evident in the Mediterranean. In recent decades, warm days and nights, heat waves, extreme precipitation and soil dryness have increased and cold days and nights have decreased. Regarding sea level rise, there are areas in the Mediterranean Sea with current average increases of more than 6 mm/year, but also with decreases of more than 4 mm/year.32 All model projections agree on the region's future warming and drying with potential huge risks and costs to the region's economy, population centres and biodiversity. More specifically, in the first MedECC Assessment Report annual average temperatures on land and sea across the Mediterranean Basin are 1.54°C higher than during pre-industrial times and they are projected to rise until 2100 by an additional 3.8 to 6.5°C for a high greenhouse gas concentration scenario and 0.5 to 2.0°C for a scenario compatible with the long-term goal of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement to keep the global temperature well below +2°C above the pre-industrial level[70].

~~51.~~52. In the near future, warm temperature extremes will increase and heat waves will intensify in duration and peak temperatures. For 2°C of global warming above the pre-industrial value, maximum daytime temperatures in the Mediterranean will likely increase by 3.3°C. With 4°C global warming, nearly all nights will be tropical (nighttime temperature for at least five days above a location-dependent threshold) and there will be almost no cold days (below a location-dependent threshold) with dramatic effect on populations. Since the beginning of the 1980s, average Mediterranean Sea surface temperatures have increased throughout the basin, but with large sub-regional differences in the range between +0.29 and +0.44°C per decade, with stronger trends in the eastern basins (Adriatic, Aegean, Levantine and north-east Ionian Sea), marine heat waves have become longer and more intense .

[70] 2020 1st Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)

~~52.~~53. Despite strong regional variations, summer rainfall will likely be reduced by 10 to 30% in some regions, increasing existing water shortages, desertification and decreasing agricultural productivity. Aquifer recharge will be strongly impacted by warming and reduced rainfall, particularly in semi-arid areas. At current extraction rates, overexploitation of groundwater is likely to continue having a greater impact on decreasing groundwater levels than climate change[71].

~~53.~~54. Depending on the extent of climatic disruption, the consequences of climate change are expected to worsen already critical situations present in the region. The Mediterranean will face an increased risk of desertification and soil degradation, sea level rise, an increase in the duration and intensity of droughts, changes in species composition, habitat losses, and agricultural and forests production losses, resulting in an increased risk of coastal erosion, infrastructure damage and threatened water and food security. Changes in climate are also affecting and modifying the composition of forest stands and mix of species that affect carbon storage and balance. Social acceptance of these changes has to be taken into account by managers in a dynamic conservation forest perspective. The Middle East and North Africa region, which already has one of the lowest water availabilities per capita world-wide, is expected to be more severely affected. These risks all have social and human impacts related to increased vulnerability, particularly for the groups already living in poor conditions. In addition, given the inherent physical characteristics of small islands, which are emblematic of the Mediterranean Sea, the Sixth Assessment Report reconfirms their high level of vulnerability to climate stressors.

~~54.~~55. All Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols have ratified the Paris Agreement and are officially committed to achieve global peaking and 'climate neutrality' by the second half of the century. The contribution of the region to global greenhouse gas emissions is low: in 2021, Mediterranean countries contributed to 1,2% of the global CO2 emissions but varies considerably. Since 2018, CO2 emissions have decreased in most of the Mediterranean countries except Libya, Morocco, Malta, Algeria and less in Tunisia and Türkiye. The COVID-19 period contributed to reducing C02 emissions but since 2021 the trend is again rising. In the northern Mediterranean, the CO2 emissions per capita are extremely diverse: from 1.6 tons per capita in Albania to above 5.95 tons in Slovenia, in 2021. The differences in CO2 emissions per capita are also significant in the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries: from 1.26 tons in the Syrian Arab Republic to 11 tons in Libya[72]. Nevertheless, carbon footprints are increasing steadily in southern Mediterranean countries as well, which highlights the need to mitigate climate change. In particular, the energy sector, accounting for 85 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in the Middle East and North Africa region[33], and the transport sector play a crucial role in mitigation efforts.

~~55.~~56. In the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable 2016- [2035] [2026-2035] a range of actions were recommended to address common adaptation and mitigation challenges. Other climate change-related initiatives have followed, in particular the Union for the Mediterranean Expert Group on Climate Change, with a mandate to provide a multilateral and multi-stakeholder platform for exchange of information, best practices, and opportunities for cross-border cooperation.

~~56.~~57. However, progress towards a green, low-carbon and climate-resilient Mediterranean region remains limited and constrained by a number of issues and barriers that still need to be addressed. Scientific knowledge, data and information from research and monitoring systems remain insufficiently developed and shared. When such information resources have been developed, they are often not easily utilisable in decision-making processes. Moreover, even when information is utilisable, it is often not used. Awareness of the co-benefits of climate change policies for economic development is low, which hampers their implementation. Regional cooperation efforts are scattered and would benefit from better coordination. Persistent market distortions and substantial financing and technology gaps across the region limit the shift towards more climate-friendly development models, especially in the area of renewable energies and energy efficiency. In addition, public participation, the involvement of the private and finance sectors, and the capacity to benefit from international funding mechanisms need to be fostered.

~~57.~~58. Adapting to climate change is as important as addressing its root causes. The acknowledgement of the diverse socio-economic, environmental and political contexts within individual Mediterranean countries is also critical. The Mediterranean countries need to identify and develop a country-based approach as well as a regional approach to climate change adaptation, with common regional priorities in order to benefit from a more tailored and coordinated response and to increase the resilience of the Mediterranean to climate

[71] First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) on "Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future", MedECC, 2020
[72] Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development dashboard indicator No. 21 (2023 data)

change. This is the main purpose of the updated Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Zones (RCCAF) framework will assist stakeholders and policy makers at all levels across the Mediterranean in order to: (i) promote appropriate institutional and policy frameworks, increase awareness and stakeholder engagement and enhance capacity building and cooperation; (ii) Identify, assess and implement best practices (including low regret measures) for effective and sustainable adaptation to climate change impacts; (iii) promote leveraging of existing and emerging finance mechanisms relevant to climate change adaptation, including international and domestic instruments; (iv) promote better informed decision- making through research and scientific cooperation and improved availability and use of reliable data, information and tools.

~~58.~~59. The Mediterranean region is at a crossroads with regard to climate change and development. If left unaddressed, climate change will pose a serious risk to economic growth and may jeopardize achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in most Mediterranean countries. Climate change is no longer considered an environmental or scientific issue but rather a developmental challenge that requires urgent and dynamic policy and technical responses at the regional, national and local levels. Adaptation is not only about responding directly to the impacts of climate change but also about addressing wider sources of existing vulnerabilities. Mitigation is not only about avoiding dangerous climate change but also an opportunity to re-orientate the way natural resources are used, in more sustainable directions.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Objective 1: Address climate change with emphasis to adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Targets</td><td colspan="2">Indicators</td></tr>
<tr><td>Regional</td><td>Global</td></tr>
<tr><td>MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators
UNEP/MAP System other indicators</td><td>Relevant Global Indicators ~~SDGs~~</td></tr>
<tr><td>Target 1: By 2030, Contracting Parties to minimize the impact of climate change and Mediterranean Sea acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches, as well as investments on climate-resilient infrastructures, while minimizing negative and fostering positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity</td><td>MSSD Core indicator 6 a), Atmospheric Surface temperature; 6 b), Sea surface temperature

NEW Indicator Average marine acidity (pH) measured at agreed suite of representative sampling stations</td><td>SDG Indicator 14.3.1: ~~Average marine acidity (pH) measured at agreed suite of representative sampling stations~~

Target 8 Indicators of KMGBF:
Component indicators
~~Total climate regulation services provided by ecosystems by ecosystem type (System of Environmental Economic Accounts)~~
~~Number of countries that adopt and implement national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 that include biodiversity~~
~~National greenhouse inventories from land use and land use change~~
- ~~Bioclimatic Ecosystem Resilience Index (BERI)~~

Complementary indicators
~~Above-ground biomass~~</td></tr>
</table>

Objective 1: Address climate change with emphasis to adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority		
		~~stock in forests (tonnes/ha)~~ ~~National greenhouse inventories from land use and land use change~~ ~~Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies~~ ~~Number of least developed countries and small island developing States with nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans, strategies as reported in adaptation communications and national communications~~ ~~Index of coastal eutrophication~~ - ~~Carbon stocks and annual net GHG emissions, by land use category, split by natural and non-natural land cover~~
~~**Target 2 Option 1** By 2030 Contacting Patries have in place national climate change adaptation strategies~~ **Target 2** ~~**Option 2**~~ By 2030 Contracting Parties should develop strategies that include information on climate change risks, its priorities, plans and actions to build adaptation and climate resilience		**SDG Indicator 13.2.1** Number of countries with nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, as reported to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
Target 3: by 2030 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention should develop and submit their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to contribute to limiting global warming to 1.5°C, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 43% and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050	**MSSD Dashboard indicator 21**, Green House Gas emissions per capita (related to GDP) [MSSD] **MSSD Core indicator 5,** Carbon dioxide emissions per capita	**SDG 13,** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts **Indicator 13.2.1**, Number of countries with nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, as reported to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change **Indicator 13.2.2**, Total greenhouse gas emissions per year

Objective 1: Address climate change with emphasis to adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority		
Target 4: By 2030, Contracting Parties will reach a minimum of 20% of renewable energy in their energy mix, by increasing the renewable energy share derived from renewable resources in total final consumption, thus encouraging shifting towards energy transition, including soil management and food systems transformation and building sectors	**MSSD Dashboard Indicator 22b** Renewable energy share in the total energy consumption	**SDG 7,** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all **Indicator 7.2.1,** Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption

~~59.~~60. Climate change policies need to be based on sound scientific knowledge and data, coupled with awareness raising and technical capacities to ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems (strategic direction 1.1). At a national level, the Strategy focuses on the strengthening of monitoring systems and the establishment of innovative communication programmes with the cooperation of academic institutions, centres of excellence and national and intergovernmental institutions, and also through dedicated education programmes and sensitization campaigns. It also emphasizes assessment and enhancing the climate change adaptation capacity of ecosystems such as coasts, wetlands and forests, as well as their mitigation services, as in the case of forests and marine areas – considering that these actions are often already available without the need for upfront investment as well as the need to support Countries in developing legal indicators for efficient climate governance. At a regional level, the Strategy promotes a Mediterranean research agenda to be implemented through synergies, data sharing and harmonization, and regional level education through various schemes such as massive open online course (MOOC) programmes on Mediterranean climate change issues and responses. This section contains also a regional action for enhancing regional capacities for climate change monitoring and analysis through multi-country data-sharing agreements and integration of existing climate observation and early warning systems. This calls for the promotion of harmonised indicators and tools for climate change vulnerability and mitigation assessments such as climate risk analysis and adaptation planning under uncertainty, disaster risk management, climate change economic costs, as well as monitoring, reporting and verification of emissions/reductions in greenhouse gases. The flagship initiative Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC), an open and independent international scientific expert network, providing information to decision-makers and the general public on the basis of available scientific information and on-going research, further focuses on the promotion of a regional science-policy interface mechanism, including the social and behavioral sciences, with a view to preparing consolidated regional scientific assessments and guidance on climate change trends, impacts and adaptation and mitigation option, as the First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)[73], the Special Report on Climate and Environmental Coastal Risks in the Mediterranean[74] and the Special Report Interlinking climate change with the Water – Energy – Food – Ecosystems (WEFE) nexus in the Mediterranean Basin[75].

Strategic Direction 1.1: Increase scientific knowledge, education, raise awareness, and develop technical capacities to deal with climate change and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		

[73] https://www.medecc.org/medecc-reports/climate-and-environmental-change-in-the-mediterranean-basin-current-situation-and-risks-for-the-future-1st-mediterranean-assessment-report/
[74] https://www.medecc.org/medecc-reports/med-coastal-risks/
[75] https://www.medecc.org/medecc-reports/climate-wefe-nexus/

Strategic Direction 1.1: Increase scientific knowledge, education, raise awareness, and develop technical capacities to deal with climate change and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
1.1.1. Upgrade, sustain and expand climate, weather and water monitoring systems.	National governments, government specialized agencies, National and Regional Parliaments[76] regional and global institutions, academia	2030
1.1.2. Assess, communicate, protect and enhance climate change adaptation capacity of ecosystems such as coasts, wetlands and forests, as well as their mitigation services, as in the case of forests and marine areas.	National governments, government specialized agencies, National and Regional Parliaments, regional and global institutions, academia	2030
1.1.3. Establish national climate clearinghouses to ensure that the relevant knowledge, data and information reach the various types of stakeholders.	National governments, academia, regional and global institutions, private sector	2030
1.1.4. Raise public awareness through environmental education campaigns, youth events and ensure climate change is mainstreamed in the formal educational curricula, including through dedicated courses.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, regional and global institutions, academia, civil society, youth	2030
1.1.5. Ensure training programs for local authorities and community leaders, teachers, educational stakeholders, youth to increase knowledge on climate adaptation and resilience.[77]	Educational Institutions, academia, schools, professional development Institutions, Environmental Education Centers	2030
Regional		
1.1.6. Promote a Mediterranean research agenda on climate change by encouraging collaborative programmes and networking amongst research centres and universities.	Regional and global institutions, UfM, PAM, academia, research centres, civil society	2035
1.1.7. Enhance regional capacities for climate change monitoring and analysis through multi-country data-sharing agreements and integration of existing climate observation and early warning systems.	Regional and global institutions, PAM-CGS, academia, research centres, civil society	2030
1.1.8. Promote harmonised indicators and tools for climate change vulnerability and mitigation assessments, including climate risk analysis and adaptation planning under uncertainty, disaster risk management, climate change economic costs, as well as monitoring, reporting and verification of emissions/reductions in greenhouse gases.	Regional and global institutions, academia, specialized governmental agencies, civil society, MedECC	2030

[76] Comment by PAM
[77] Comment by Cyprus

Strategic Direction 1.1: Increase scientific knowledge, education, raise awareness, and develop technical capacities to deal with climate change and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
1.1.9. Establish regional courses (promote a "Mediterranean Climate Change Literacy Program") and diplomas; promote e-learning and massive open online course (MOOC) programmes on Mediterranean climate change issues and responses.	Regional and global institutions, academic networks, specialized governmental agencies, civil society, MedECC	2030
1.1.10. Develop legal indicators for efficient climate governance in the Mediterranean	Regional and global institutions, National and Regional Parliaments, academic networks, specialized governmental agencies, civil society	2030

~~60.~~61. Strategic direction 1.2 seeks acceleration in the uptake of climate-smart and climate-resilient responses that can assist in addressing climate change issues. At a national level, a key action to be undertaken is the designing, financing and implementation of national technology investment plans for climate change. At the Mediterranean level, the Strategy promotes climate change adaptation and mitigation knowledge-sharing platforms and support mechanisms aiming at fostering collaborative R&D and innovation programmes between universities, governments and businesses, including start- ups and SMEs. This calls for the utilisation of existing structures within the MAP system to support the dissemination of regional climate knowledge, also hosting a web-based regional climate change clearinghouse mechanism that will contain information on climate change monitoring, research, practical tools and projects. A regional action focuses on the creation of a Mediterranean Climate Technology Initiative, taking advantage of such existing initiatives at the global, European and national levels.

Strategic Direction 1.2: Accelerate the uptake of climate smart and climate resilient responses		
Actions **National**	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
1.2.1. Design, finance and implement national technology investment plans for climate change.	National governments, regional and global institutions, private sector	2030
Regional		
1.2.2. Develop regional climate change adaptation and mitigation knowledge- sharing platforms and support mechanisms aiming at fostering collaborative R&D and innovation programmes between universities, governments and businesses, including start-ups and SMEs.	Regional and global institutions, academia, civil society, private sector	2030
1.2.3. Create climate change specific funding lines on innovation open to southern and eastern Mediterranean countries under large-scale international programmes (e.g. European Union Research Programmes Climate KIC, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)	Regional and global institutions, national governments, private sector, civil society	2030

1.2.4. Utilize existing structures within the MAP system and its partnerships[78], to support the dissemination of regional climate knowledge, also hosting a web-based regional climate change clearinghouse mechanism that will contain information on climate change monitoring, research, practical tools and projects.	UNEP/MAP, regional and global institutions, civil society, MedECC, PAM	2030

~~61.~~62. Strategic direction 1.3 focusses on the leverage of existing and emerging climate finance mechanisms, including international and domestic instruments, and on enhancing the engagement of the private and finance sectors. Financing in support of responses to climate change issues will be mobilised through various instruments including pricing, targeted subsidies, national funds, eco-taxes, concessional interest rates, and others as appropriate, at the national level, while encouraging the shift of public and private spending and consumption habits towards green and climate-friendly practices, processes and products. New fund-raising opportunities need to be developed that advocates the legal frameworks and economic policies that incentivize green practices. Conducive legal frameworks are also required. At a regional level, the focus is on assisting countries to strengthen institutional and technical capacities to improve access to international climate funding mechanisms, including non-conventional and innovative funding, and ensure effective delivery of funds.

Strategic Direction 1.3: Leverage existing and emerging climate finance mechanisms, including international and domestic instruments, and enhance the engagement of the private and finance sectors		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
1.3.1. Set up suitable domestic financial instruments to finance the costs of adaptation and mitigation efforts at national level while encouraging climate -friendly investment.	National governments, local authorities, private sector	2030
1.3.2. Establish conducive legal and legislative[79] frameworks for leveraging private sector investments and developing partnerships between public and private actors in the delivery of climate change actions.	National governments, civil society, private sector	2030
1.3.3 Capacity building for stakeholders on bonds to access climate/green and sustainable finance[80]		2030
Regional		
1.3.4. Assist countries and relevant international organizations to strengthen institutional and technical capacities to improve access to international climate funding mechanisms, including non-conventional and innovative funding and ensure effective delivery of funds.	Regional institutions, national governments, National and Regional Parliaments,	2030

~~62.~~63. Strategic direction 1.4 addresses mainstreaming climate change at the legislative and policy levels. It provides a particular focus on measures concerning energy and transport, and delivering sustainable no/low regret adaptation measures across all vulnerable sectors and territories such as coastal and urban areas, water

[78] Comment by PAM
[79] Comment by PAM
[80] Comment by Tunisia

management, agriculture, health, and tourism. The inclusion of climate measures into coastal policies and plans is particularly highlighted. With respect to energy, the Strategy seeks to mainstream climate change through scaling up investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy, promoting universal energy access, reforming energy subsidies, and ensuring that energy projects are assessed for their climate impact. Coordination mechanisms will be reinforced and the effective involvement of local authorities in planning and implementation will be enhanced. At the regional level, the Strategy calls for enhancing national structures and strengthening the implementation of commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as well as implementing high-level regional initiatives including the UNEP/MAP updated Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework, and other regional initiatives. The national efforts will be supported by a regional climate change knowledge and innovation centre contributing also to regional coordination and cooperation. Country-specific analysis of legal needs guided by regional climate objectives on climate change adaptation and project designed to support countries in this process, offering technical and financial assistance to strengthen legal frameworks is key to facilitating cross-border knowledge exchange and best practice sharing, allowing the region to make significant progress.

Strategic Direction 1.4: Encourage institutional, policy legal and legislative reforms and initiatives for the effective mainstreaming of climate change responses into national and local development frameworks in all sectors		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
1.4.1. Mainstream climate change into national legislation and policies with a focus on measures concerning energy and transport and on delivering no/low regret adaptation measures across all vulnerable sectors and territories such as coastal and urban areas, water management, agriculture, health, and tourism; introduce climate change measures into urban and coastal policies and plans.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
1.4.2. Mainstream climate change in the energy sector through scaling up investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy, promoting universal energy access and reforming energy subsidies and ensuring that energy projects are assessed for their climate impact.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2030
1.4.3. Establish designated climate change coordination mechanisms or utilize existing mechanisms within countries involving all relevant stakeholders.	National governments, local authorities, regional and international organizations, UfM, academia, civil society, private sector	2030
1.4.4. Enhance the leadership and capacity of local authorities addressing climate change issues, through twinning and capacity-building programmes and greater access to climate finance.	National governments, local authorities, regional and international organizations, academia, civil society, private sector	2030
1.4.5. Implement and monitor commitments and obligations under the UNFCCC climate agreement and its implementation mechanisms.	National governments, local authorities, civil society	2030

Strategic Direction 1.4: Encourage institutional, policy legal and legislative reforms and initiatives for the effective mainstreaming of climate change responses into national and local development frameworks in all sectors		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
1.4.6. Implement high-level regional initiatives, including the UNEP/MAP Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework, and other regional initiatives as appropriate.	Regional and international organizations, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society	2030
1.4.7. Implement a country-specific analysis of legal needs guided by regional climate objectives on climate change adaptation	Regional and international organizations, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society	2030
Regional		
1.4.8. Provide policy tools and guidance through the available climate change knowledge and innovation platforms[81] for enhancing national governance, legal and investment frameworks in terms of climate change strategies and action plans and regional coordination and cooperation.	Regional and international organizations, national governments	2030
1.4.9. Mobilize resources and support for the development of trans- Mediterranean power grids for efficient utilization of renewable energy sources in the region, including solar energy.	Regional organizations, national governments, local authorities, private sector	2030

~~63.~~64. Strategic Direction 1.5 is strictly linked to Objective 5 Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance, as well as with Objective 4 Plan-and manage sustainable [and resilient] Mediterranean cities, Strategic Direction 4.6, Promote green infrastructures and renewable energies and improve energy efficiency, to contribute towards reducing the ecological footprint of the built environment. Related Actions under Strategic Direction 1.5 are therefore complementary. In 2021, Mediterranean countries contributed to 1,2% of the global CO2 emissions, while the expected impacts of climate and environmental changes necessitate an accelerated energy transition in the countries of this region to enable a secure, sustainable and inclusive development.[82] In fact, economy decarbonization and deployment of renewable energies play a pivotal role in contributing to decline of the greenhouse gas emissions, and by leveraging on resource-efficient, low-carbon and circular economy as well as on a diverse range of renewable energy sources. At national level Action 1.5 proposes the development of country-specific cost-effective and inclusive economy decarbonisation policies and strategies/Actions Plans as well as the definition of complementary policies on reallocation of public/private sector budget/investment, long-term infrastructure planning, emissions pricing standards, as well as on labor market adaptation and related reskilling needs. The flagship imitative on delivering 1TW of renewable energy capacity in the Mediterranean by 2030 (TERAMED) stands as concrete response towards accelerating the uptake of climate-smart and climate-resilient.

Strategic Direction 1.5 Promote economy decarbonization energy transition and deployment of renewable energies		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
1.5.1 Design and deploy country-specific cost-effective and inclusive ~~economy~~ decarbonisation policies and strategies/Actions Plans, ~~taking in due account~~ through the pivotal role of green technologies, research and innovation, digitalization and Artificial Intelligence to support low-carbon economic[83] activities	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, sub-national and local authorities	2030

[81] Comment by EcoUnion
[82] Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)
[83] Comment by EcoUnion

Strategic Direction 1.5 Promote economy decarbonization energy transition and deployment of renewable energies		
1.5.2 Definition of complementary policies on reallocation of public/private sector budget/investment, Long-term infrastructure planning, carbon[84] emissions pricing standards and regulations to enhance the cost-effectiveness of decarbonisation strategies	National governments, private sector and investors	2030
1.5.3 Development of policies and Action Plans on labor market adaptation and related reskilling needs for a low-carbon and circular economy[85]	National governments, educational/academic institutions	2030
1.5.4 Development of policy frameworks and Plans to streamline renewable energy infrastructures and projects, including on renewable energy technologies, and catalyze private sector investments	National governments, sub-national and local authorities, private sector and investors	2030

~~64.~~65. Nature-based solutions are recognised for their potential to address the threats, providing multi-purpose solutions to support ecosystem restoration and enhancement of ecosystem services to protect society against negative impacts of climate change. In March 2022, the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly adopted the Resolution UNEP/EA.5/Res.5[86] on the definition of nature-based Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development, while at the UNFCCC COP27, nature-based solutions emerged for their potential to address climate change. Nature-based solutions are typically stakeholder-driven and tailored to regional conditions therefore it is key to empower regional and local authorities and stakeholder communities to identify and implement Nature-Based solutions on capacity building and knowledge sharing. To this aim, Action 1.6 focuses on the development of activities aimed at strengthening national and local capacities, while building on the exiting regional platforms and networking initiatives, including the EU Missions on adaptation to climate change and on water and ocean.

Strategic Direction 1.6 Strengthen national and local capacities on the application of nature-based solution for climate change adaptation and mitigation		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
1.6.1 Assess the national and local capacity needs for implementing nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation	National governments, sub-national and local authorities	2030
1.6.2 National Guidelines for the development of national and local capacities for the application of nature-based solution for climate change adaptation and mitigation	National governments, sub-national and local authorities	2030

[84] Comment by EcoUnion
[85] Comment by EcoUnion
[86] http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39864/NATURE-BASED%20SOLUTIONS%20FOR%20SUPPORTING%20SUSTAINABLE%20DEVELOPMENT.%20English.pdf

Strategic Direction 1.6 Strengthen national and local capacities on the application of nature-based solution for climate change adaptation and mitigation		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
1.6.3 Promotion of trainings, educational programmes and learning platforms/hubs policies, knowledge and best practices on nature-based solution for climate change adaptation and mitigation	National governments, educational/academic institutions Environmental Education/ESD Centers[87]	2030
Regional		
1.6.4 Support national, sub-national and local capacities to participate and set up regional and sub-regional projects, networks and Platforms on best practices exchanges on Nature-Based Solutions, taking also into account the activities and network of the EU Mission[s] on adaptation to climate change, water and ocean and future developments	National governments, sub-national and local authorities, regional and sub regional organizations/institutions	2035

Objective 2: Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems

Vision and Actions

~~65.~~66. The objective focusing on healthy marine and coastal areas sits firmly and historically in the basin approach taken by the MAP and the Barcelona Convention. The 1975 MAP was the first ever regional seas programme under the UNEP umbrella. The Barcelona Convention was adopted in 1976 by the Mediterranean countries and the European Community. Since then various protocols have been adopted under the Convention to help with the protection of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal regions. The protocols currently cover dumping from ships and aircraft, oil and harmful pollution emergencies, land-based pollution, specially protected areas and biological diversity, pollution from exploitation of the continental shelf, hazardous wastes and, most recently, integrated coastal zone management.

~~66.~~67. In the last decade the Convention has actively worked on developing Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) approach and framework, recognizing it as an essential component of integrated coastal zone management.

~~67.~~68. The 2005 Strategy established the sea and coastal zones as one of its seven priority fields of action, deeming this priority as essential in making real progress in the sustainable development of the Mediterranean. In the years since its adoption, there have been a number of sub-regional, regional and global developments relevant to this objective, which include:

- **Higher profile for marine issues within sustainable development**. Rio+20 increased the focus on marine issues through its chapter on oceans and seas. In addition, there is increasing recognition of the role of marine areas in economic development, as the concept of the blue economy illustrates. In addition, at the Mediterranean level, the Istanbul Declaration19 contains a commitment from the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, "to make the Mediterranean an exemplary model in implementing activities effectively protecting the marine and coastal environment as well as contributing to sustainable development".

- **The COP23 Ministerial Declaration commits the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to intensify the activities at all levels,** to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to a swift update of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 in order to effectively implement Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and its SDGs at the regional level, seeking to amend current unsustainable trajectories and place the region on alternative pathways to sustainability and resilience.

[87] Comment by Cyprus

- **Growing relevance of the MSSD and of the awareness of the global community and the Contracting Parties on the importance to connect SDG-14 (Life bellow the Sea) with the other SDGs**, particularly those with ocean-related targets. Leveraging interlinkages between Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other Goals towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development support Governments in opening up to new and concrete opportunities to secure the sustainable long-term development of the sea[88]. Marine Spatial Planning approach can be a concrete example of a tool that concretely enhances linkages among SDGs at national and regional level.

- **Stronger regional policy instruments under the Barcelona Convention**. The adoption (2008) and entry into force (2011) of the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean, including the 2023 Conceptual Framework for Implementing Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) recognized the importance of an integrated management approach for the sustainable development of coastal zones. In addition, since 2008 the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention committed to apply the ecosystem-based approach – through the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap – to the management of human activities while enabling a sustainable use of marine goods and services, with the view to achieving or maintaining good environmental status of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal regions, their protection and preservation, as well as preventing their subsequent deterioration.

- **Sub-regional policy development**. The European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) (2008) and the associated criteria and indicators have become applicable to European Union Member States. In addition, Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is recognised as an important tool for integrated planning. The European Union Macro Regional Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) is also being implemented at sub-regional level, with a pillar focusing especially on Blue Growth.

- **Launch of a regional process since 2008 aiming at the establishment of protected areas in the areas beyond national jurisdiction,** on the basis of joint proposals by neighbouring countries for inclusion in the List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance. The further resumed fifth session of the Intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument 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 (General Assembly resolution 72/249), adopted by consensus the 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 (A/CONF.232/2023/4). Recognizing that action is needed from the Mediterranean Region as a contribution to its early entry into force and the pivotal role of the Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties in this process.

- **Global recognition of Mediterranean marine areas in need of protection, including areas of national jurisdiction and deep sea habitats and the importance of the Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs).** The 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2014 listed 15 Mediterranean areas meeting the scientific criteria for ecologically- or biologically-significant marine areas, due to issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. The 30 by 30 Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) to ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed, as well as the Target 1.4 and 1.5 of Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO).

~~68.~~69. Increased realization of the economic value of the open sea and the need for blue growth has promoted an increase in the exploration for and exploitation of non-living open sea resources (e.g. oil, gas) and emphasized the need for robust integrated maritime spatial planning to support sustainable development.[22] Therefore the Strategy promotes the blue economy concept through strong partnerships between maritime

[88] https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/ID_8_Leveraging_interlinkages.pdf

sectors and public authorities in regard to the sustainable and equitable use of marine areas and resources. In addition, the global momentum behind assessing vulnerabilities and the impacts of climate change and delivering an effective and efficient response has grown rapidly over the last decade, leading to the increased inclusion and mainstreaming of climate change in many sectors associated with coastal and marine areas.

The strategy for marine and coastal areas rests on three pillars:

- Strengthen compliance with implementation and monitoring of regional requirements and policy frameworks of the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention for coastal and marine management (strategic direction 2.1)
- Promote balanced and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources (strategic direction 2.2)
- Promote well connected ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures at national and Mediterranean level and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss (strategic direction 2.3)

Objective 2: Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems		
Targets	**Indicators**	
	Regional	**Global**
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators **UNEP/MAP System other indicators**	**SDGs**
Target 5: By 2030, Contracting Parties have ratified the Barcelona Convention Protocols and the appropriate legislative measures to implement them at the national level have been already taken	**MSSD Dashboard** **Indicator 6**: Number of ratifications and level of compliance as reported by Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties	No corresponding SDGs
Target 6: By 2030 Good Environmental Status of marine and coastal environment is maintained and enhanced through effective implementation of Ecosystem Approach and commitment under Barcelona Convention and its Protocols	Indicators of: a) Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) b) Quality Status Report for the Mediterranean (MED QSR)	**SDG 14,** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development **Indicator 14.2.1**, Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to manage marine areas
Target 7: By 2030, at least 30 per cent of the Mediterranean Sea is protected and conserved through well connected, ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, ensuring adequate geographical balance, and sustainably managed by applying ecosystem-based approaches including biodiversity and climate change-	**MSSD Dashboard Indicator 7:** Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine territorial waters **MSSD Dashboard Indicator 9a:** Number of protected areas participating in the Green List initiative **MSSD Dashboard Indicator 10**: Official development assistance	**SDG 14,** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development **Indicator 14.2.1,** Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to manage marine areas

Objective 2: Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems

Targets	Indicators	
	Regional	**Global**
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators **UNEP/MAP System other indicators**	**SDGs**
informed marine spatial planning, and by conducting environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments	and public expenditure on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems **MSSD Core indicator 10** Evolution of Mediterranean protected areas and their associated surfaces **NEW indicator:** % of MPAs with effective management plans in place **NEW indicator**: Protected area and OECM management effectiveness (MEPCA) indicator [~~**NEW indicator**: Level of connectivity of the existing MPA networks~~]	**SDG 15,** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss **Indicator 15.5.1,** Red List Index
Target 8: By 2030 Contracting Parties shall ensure effective implementation of the legally binding measures adopted under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols on wastewater, marine litter, plastic pollution and under IMO International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Convention and its Annexes)	~~**MSSD Core indicator 7**~~ ~~**a)** Water withdrawal per inhabitant;~~ ~~**b)** Renewable freshwater resources per capita~~ ~~**MSSD Core indicator 8,** Plastic leakages at sea~~ **Indicator:** ~~All~~ Number of Contracting Parties ~~to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols~~ that have ratified the MARPOL Convention and its Annexes~~, particularly Annex VI, Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships~~	**SDG 6,** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all **Indicator 6.3.1,** "Proportion of wastewater flows safely treated" **SDG 14,** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development **Indicator 14.1.1**, (a) Index of coastal eutrophication; and (b) plastic debris density **Indicator 14.2.1** Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to managing marine areas

~~69.~~70. National actions under strategic direction 2.1 include strengthening implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its protocols, with focus on the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management, national

coastal conservation initiatives, and the updated Ecosystem Approach Roadmap, as well as delivery of ratified protocols through strengthened national policies and priority actions. These processes, developed in more detail in the strategic direction 6.4(Governance objective), will be supported by regional and sub-regional roadmaps for delivery of protocols and enhanced coordination, exchange of good practices, including technology and local knowledge transfer. Joint efforts will be initiated for the coastal and marine protected areas in the Mediterranean Sea, including the areas beyond national jurisdiction, as part of the wider efforts to implement the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO).

Strategic direction 2.1: Strengthen implementation, compliance and monitoring with regional requirements of regulatory and policy frameworks of the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention for coastal and marine management		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
2.1.1. Strengthen the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and other regional policy instruments, as well as related national action plans and through enhanced prioritization and results-based management through ministries with environmental and budget portfolios and implementing line agencies.	National governments, local authorities, regional institutions, private sector, civil society	2035
2.1.2. Implement the updated Ecosystem Approach Roadmap and in synergy with the implementation of MSP, to achieve healthy marine ecosystems and conserve marine biodiversity	UNEP/MAP, national governments	2035
2.1.3. Transpose the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (where ratified) and its Action Plan into national policies and further its implementation, and implement COP 23 MSP Decision IG.26/10	National governments, local authorities, regional institutions, with the support of UNEP/MAP (PAP/RAC)	2030
2.1.4. Support national coastal conservation initiatives and strengthen or develop specific national laws for management of coastal areas, including concepts such as public trusteeships.	National governments	2030
2.1.5. Create or strengthen delivery nodes for ratified protocols through national prioritization and policy strengthening.	National governments	2030
2.1.6 Implement the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO), and its related national action plans.	SPA/RAC in cooperation with regional institutions, national governments, civil society	2030
2.1.7. Ensure All Marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs) have adaptive management plans adopted, effectively implemented and periodically reviewed	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, regional institutions, civil society	2035
Regional		
2.1.8. Improve regional and sub- regional coordination, exchange of good practices, including technology and local knowledge transfer, including through the MSP Working Group	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society, UNEP/MAP	2035

Strategic direction 2.1: Strengthen implementation, compliance and monitoring with regional requirements of regulatory and policy frameworks of the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention for coastal and marine management		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
2.1.9 Develop and implement regional and sub- regional targeted measures and roadmaps, where lacking, for delivery of all Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in synergy with other regional policy instruments as relevant.	Regional institutions, national governments and local authorities	2030

~~70.~~71. In order to address the issues resulting from the unsustainable exploitation of living and non-living coastal and marine resources, the Strategy calls for sustainable and equitable use of marine and coastal resources. A regional advocacy towards integrated marine spatial planning, based on ecosystem approach principles, will support the implementation of the strategic direction.

Strategic direction 2.2.: Promote balanced and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
2.2.1. Promote and support the blue economy concept through strong partnership between maritime sectors and public authorities in regard to the sustainable and equitable use of marine areas and resources, including supporting the coexistence in using marine space, as promoted by COP 23 MSP Decision IG.26/10	National governments, regional institutions, UNEP-MAP	2035
2.2.2. Ensure that the necessary regulatory instruments, including strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment, national development guidelines, and exploration and extraction tender criteria are effectively in place, and amend national regulatory framework as required.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, regional institutions	2035
2.2.3. Implement relevant legislative and policy measures to control open ocean exploitation within national and regional requirements, including liability regimes.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, regional institutions, private sector	2035
2.2.4. Translate the Offshore Protocol (where ratified) and its Action Plan into national policies and further its implementation.	National governments, local authorities, regional institutions, with the support of UNEP/MAP (REMPEC)	2035
2.2.5. Safeguard the Mediterranean fisheries by ensuring that all fish stocks are being fished sustainably and effectively.	National governments, regional institutions	2030
Regional		
2.2.6. Prepare a regional programme on assessment and control regarding open ocean exploration and exploitation of living and non-living resources.	Regional institutions, private sector, with support of UNEP/MAP	2030

Strategic direction 2.2.: Promote balanced and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
2.2.7. Promote MSP implementation, including capacity building and sharing of best practices at regional and sub-regional level	UNEP/MAP	2030
2.2.8 Coastal resilience platform, including regional compendium of adaptation measures for coastal and marine sectors	UNEP/MAP	2030
2.2.9 Develop and implement monitoring, supported by Artificial Intelligence, to assess the overexploitation/loss of natural resources, in particular water, forests, space, sand, etc	UNEP/MAP	2030

~~71.~~72. Strategic Direction 2.3 focuses on the promotion of networks of ecologically protected marine and coastal areas at national and Mediterranean level, as well as the enhancement of stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss. The pressures on protected areas created by insufficient spatial coverage, planning and management processes call for, at the national level, programmes that strengthen the protection of biodiversity and the actual management of such areas. Legal or financing mechanisms accompany actions that raise awareness on the economic, social and environmental value of ecosystem services. The promotion of national and regional networking processes aims at reuniting directors and managers for enhancing the synergies of their actions. At the regional level, the Strategy supports further networking, as well as the promotion of the "Green list" standards to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of park management bodies created at the IUCN World Parks Congress, and it launches the flagship initiative on Promote the protection and conservation of Seagrass/Posidonia Meadows as crucial ecosystem.

Strategic direction 2.3: Promote well connected ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures and nature-based solutions at national, transboundary and Mediterranean level and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
2.3.1. Promote well connected, ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures and nature-based solutions at national level	National governments, local authorities, civil society	2030
2.3.2. Establish programmes to enhance awareness among local stakeholders on the economic, social and environmental value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss for their daily lives.	National governments, local authorities, rural communities, civil society	2030
2.3.3. Set up financial mechanisms (national funds, payment for ecosystem services, compensations) to support policies ensuring the provision of environmental and social services.	National governments, local authorities	2035
2.3.4. Promote Marine literacy and Education targeting coastal communities, schools, and local governance structures. Integrate sustainable fishing practices, and ecosystem restoration into educational curricula. Support community-school	National governments, local authorities, educational Institutions, civil society,	2030

Strategic direction 2.3: Promote well connected ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures and nature-based solutions at national, transboundary and Mediterranean level and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
based marine stewardship programs for sustainable management[89]		
Regional		
2.3.5 Promote a regional network of managers of ecologically protected areas, and nature-based solutions, building on the experience of the existing initiatives	Regional Institutions	2035

Objective 3: Promote sustainable resource management, and food security through sustainable forms of rural development and food systems

Vision and Actions

~~72.~~73. Rural areas in the Mediterranean are relatively diverse in their history, culture, natural conditions, population density, settlements, economic structure, and human resources and thus require different policy interventions, but share a potential for the establishment of new bases for economic and social development.

~~73.~~74. When addressing the use of natural resources in rural areas, attention must be paid to the protection of terrestrial ecosystems, which provide essential goods and services for human development. Those range from food and water to medicinal plants, fuel, timber, and housing materials. The maintenance of the good status and health of those ecosystems is therefore fundamental for both biodiversity conservation and human well-being.

~~74.~~75. The three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity – conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources – reflect the importance of this theme. The 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and builds on the Convention's previous Strategic Plans, sets out an ambitious pathway to reach the global vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050. Among the Framework's key elements are 4 goals for 2050 and 23 targets for 2030. The intention is not only to guarantee the conservation of all biodiversity components, but also to address key socioeconomic aspects, such as poverty reduction, sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and forestry, the needs of women and local communities, traditional knowledge, and public participation.

~~75.~~76. In the northern Mediterranean countries, there has been agricultural and pastoral land abandonment and reforestation campaigns have been effective, while in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries the pressures on ecosystems remain strong, particularly in North African countries because of the high population pressure on land and water resources, urban sprawl, over-exploitation of forests and overgrazing; in addition, desertification processes are exacerbated by climate change, causing increased aridity and extreme events (long periods of drought, devastating floods of land and livestock, large cold spells), with strong socio-economic impacts on farmers. In this context, food cooperation among Mediterranean countries is also a main issue as regards the situation of the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries and the existing complementarities between the North and the South.

~~76.~~77. The Mediterranean agri-food sector consumes significant rural resources and constitutes one of the main drivers of environmental degradation through processes such as desertification of marginal lands and pollution run-off from farming and industry[90]. At the same time the sector is a key player in the

[89] Comment by Cyprus
[90] Comment by PAM

conservation of the Mediterranean agricultural landscape and in providing livelihoods and employment. The sustainable management of natural resources, rural development and food production and security are interdependent aspects that ensure the well-being of rural communities and provide significant inputs to downstream industries, from food processing to tourism.

~~77.~~78. All around the Mediterranean's rural areas, and food security are of paramount importance. Given the importance of small and medium-sized farms in the rural areas of the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries and their mobilization of the family workforce, family farms contribute to food security of farm households and local communities by the supply of domestic markets. Furthermore, the intra-family and intergenerational solidarity prevailing in farm households contribute significantly to the fight against food insecurity and social vulnerability of rural populations. However, access to land is increasingly open to foreign capital and investors without much consideration of the effects on agricultural and rural societies at the local level. The southern and eastern Mediterranean countries are also vulnerable to changes in international agricultural prices due to their high dependence on cereal imports. This context makes agricultural and food security issues particularly sensitive.

~~78.~~79. Furthermore, since the impacts of climate change are likely to include the degradation of agricultural water resources and loss of fertile soils, ensuring food security and rural vitality by adapting agriculture to climate change is also necessary. Indeed small farmers will be directly affected by these impacts, which represent risks in terms of the stability of rural areas. This calls for adaptation strategies and services for agricultural and rural areas, as well as public and private support for those adaptations, such as promotion of agri-environmental practices, alternative agricultural methods, crop diversification, controlling and limiting use of genetically modified organisms, and conservation of water and soil, limiting the consumption of such natural resources.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Objective 3: Promote sustainable resource management, and food security through sustainable forms of rural development and food systems</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Targets</td><td colspan="2">Indicators</td></tr>
<tr><td>Regional</td><td>Global</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators
UNEP/MAP System other indicators</td><td>SDGs</td></tr>
<tr><td>Target 9: By 2030, Mediterranean Countries have at least 75% of their population using safely managed drinking water services and at least 30% using safely managed sanitation in a multi-level context of water stress, competing demands and growing shortages, particularly for vulnerable populations and women.</td><td>MSSD
Dashboard 14: Proportion of population (in %) using safely managed drinking water service

MSSD Core indicator 7
a) Water withdrawal per inhabitant;
b) Renewable freshwater resources per capita
MSSD Core indicator 8, Plastic leakages at sea</td><td>SDG 6, Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Indicator 6.1.1, Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services

Indicator 6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water

Indicator 6.4.2 Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources</td></tr>
</table>

Objective 3: Promote sustainable resource management, and food security through sustainable forms of rural development and food systems		
Targets	**Indicators**	
	Regional	**Global**
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators **UNEP/MAP System other indicators**	**SDGs**
Target 10: By 2030, Contracting Parties will ensure that at least 90% of the population has access to affordable, safe, and nutritious food all year round, through the promotion of resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems, including local supply chains.	**MSSD Indicator 11:** Global Food Security Index	**SDG 2,** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture **Indicator 2.1.2** Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)

~~79.~~80. The Strategy underlines the need for compliance of national legal measures with international and regional commitments to promote the sustainable use, management and conservation of natural resources and ecosystems (strategic direction 3.1). It calls for effective and participatory management of protected areas and exploitation of renewable natural resources for a regulated development in rural areas, including through Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and permitting processes. The Strategy aims to address the limits to sustainable rural development caused by the unsustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem goods and services, particularly energy, food and water, through improving efficiency. The Strategy takes into consideration that the UN General Assembly recognized in 2010, through Resolution 64/292, the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights. An improved forests management is equality tacked, both at national and regional level, while water desalinization and natural resources reuse approaches and plans are included. The Flagship initiatives Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus (WEFE Nexus) in the Mediterranean Source to Sea continuum and the Mediterranean Forest Initiative will concretely support these approaches. The Strategy recommends institutional and legal reforms fostering water cooperation programmes among sectors and cross-borders. The Strategy also suggests adopting policies, regulatory measures and instruments for sustainable exploitation of non-renewable resources and related post-extraction restoration.

Strategic direction 3.1: Promote the circular/regenerative use, management and conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Natural Resources and ecosystems in the Mediterranean Region		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
3.1.1. Ensure that legal measures are in place to conserve/restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in line with international and regional commitments.	National governments, civil society	2035

Strategic direction 3.1: Promote the circular/regenerative use, management and conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Natural Resources and ecosystems in the Mediterranean Region		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
3.1.2. Ensure Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and permitting processes are implemented to support the development in rural areas, as well as monitoring and adaptive management of interventions.	National governments, local authorities, regional institutions, civil society, private sector	2035
3.1.3. Put in place participative cross-sectoral resource management strategies to ensure that renewable natural resources are extracted in ways that do not threaten the future use of the resources, and without exceeding their maximum sustainable yield.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
3.1.4. Achieve a sustainable balance between production of food, use of water and use of energy, through improving energy and water use efficiency, promoting the use of renewable energy sources, as well as through the introduction of institutional and legal reforms.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
3.1.5. Develop socio-economic models for national strategic choices for water allocation between agriculture, industry, tourism, and domestic uses, taking into account environmental and social aspects, as well as One Health initiatives and economic development needs.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, Private sector	2035
3.1.6. Ensure that extraction and management of non-renewable resources are carried out in ways that minimize environmental impacts, and that permitting systems include post-extraction restoration.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
3.1.7. Develop action plans for the restoration of land from extractive activities.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
3.1.8. Secure, in a climate change context, water supply considering the development of nonconventional resources such as reuse and desalination withdrawal and also promotion of sobriety in conventional water uses	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2030
3.1.9. Ensure that forests are managed in a sustainable way to allow managers to benefit from goods & services (cultural, regulation, supply) they provide including social consideration (acceptance) of forest stands evolution due to climate change	National governments, local authorities	2035
3.1.10 Develop national plans / strategies to secure means and better prevent fires but also dieback and desertification of the Mediterranean Basin	National governments, local authorities	2030
Regional		

Strategic direction 3.1: Promote the circular/regenerative use, management and conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Natural Resources and ecosystems in the Mediterranean Region		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
3.1.11. Develop or strengthen cross border water cooperation programmes and networks	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
3.1.12. Strengthen regional plans on reuse and desalination making them more sustainable, in particular regarding brines discharges and CO2 emissions and renewable energy sources for desalination production	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, private sector	2035
3.1.13 Harmonize a monitoring system and assessment programme for a more sustainable management of forests	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities	2035

~~80.~~81. The Strategy aims to promote conservation and use of indigenous or traditional plant varieties and domestic animal breeds, as well as to value traditional knowledge and practices in rural management decisions (strategic direction 3.2). It calls for establishing national seed banks and knowledge repositories and encourages them to engage in regional collaboration. It promotes the valorisation of traditional knowledge and land races, emphasizing the need for supporting their integration in education and training for rural and agricultural practices.

Strategic direction 3.2: Promote conservation and use of indigenous or traditional plant varieties and domestic animal breeds, value traditional knowledge and practices in rural management decisions		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
3.2.1. Establish national seed banks and knowledge repositories of indigenous or traditional plant varieties and domestic animal breeds.	National governments, local authorities, agricultural associationsand cooperatives, civil society, academia, private sector	2030
3.2.2. Support the integration of traditional knowledge in education and training for rural and agricultural practices at national level.	National governments, local authorities[91], civil society, academia, private sector	2035
3.2.3. Promote the valorisation of traditional knowledge in rural development funding programmes.	National governments, local authorities, donor agencies	2035
3.2.4. Integrate Sustainable Agricultural Practices and Land Stewardship in education programs at a formal and non-formal level. Emphasize soil conservation, water management, and sustainable crop techniques in school education and strengthen collaboration between various actors[92]	National government, educational institutions, environmental education centers, academia, civil society	2035
Regional		
3.2.5. Establish regional collaboration between seed banks and knowledge repositories around the Mediterranean.	Regional institutions, civil society	2035

~~81.~~82. The Strategy addresses the social and environmental consequences created by inequalities affecting rural

[91] Comment by MedCities
[92] Comment by Cyprus

populations, particularly women and youth, by developing skills and opportunities through participatory rural development programmes that take into account traditional knowledge, skills and crafts in order to add value to rural territories and local cultural assets. Strategic direction 3.3 promotes inclusive and sustainable rural development, with a specific focus on poverty eradication. At a national level, policy measures and fiscal arrangements should encourage rural multi-functionality, coupling tourism and agriculture, benefiting to women's empowerment and youth employment. Such actions should also lead to equitable and sustainable access to basic local services for rural communities. A regional action focuses on international partnerships and networks to build capacity in the promotion of traditional knowledge, skills and crafts, as well as the establishment of capacity development programmes for local communities.

Strategic direction 3.3: Promote inclusive and sustainable rural development, with a specific focus on poverty eradication, food security, women's empowerment and youth employment, including equitable and sustainable access to basic local services for rural communities

Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
3.3.1. Develop participatory rural development programmes and adapt measures and fiscal arrangements to encourage rural pluriactivity and sustainable economic development of vulnerable rural communities, particularly for the benefit of women and youth, taking into account also the vulnerability of such communities to natural and human-induced hazards, which recognise the multi-functionality of rural areas.	National governments	2035
3.3.2. Develop training programmes and businesses to encourage the reviving of traditional skills, arts and crafts in view of the protection and preservation of the local cultural as well as a means to establish economic activities locally.	National governments	2030
3.3.3. Prepare action plans to support the development of rural tourism that will alleviate overcrowding in coastal cities and resorts, stimulate the utilization of locally produced products and generate local employment opportunities.	National governments	2030
Regional		
3.3.4. Develop regional/sub-regional partnerships and networks to build capacity in the promotion of traditional knowledge, skills and crafts, as well as establishment of capacity development programmes for local communities.	Regional institutions	2035

~~82.~~83. In order to ensure an equitable access of local producers and small-scale farmers to distribution channels and markets, including the tourism market (strategic direction 3.4 national programmes supporting agro-ecological and organic technologies will add value to local assets, products, and processes. This will be achieved through the use of innovative products and processes, cooperation schemes, market instruments, marketing plans, and labelling schemes. The Strategy focuses on the added-value of organic, labelled, and conservation agriculture, while controlling and limiting the use of genetically modified organisms. On the demand side, awareness-raising campaigns will be developed in order to sensitise consumers regarding local economic benefits

Strategic direction 3.4: Ensure access of local producers to distribution channels and markets, including the tourism market		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
3.4.1. Undertake actions to improve access of small-scale producers to markets, including tourism markets, through the use of innovative products and processes, cooperation schemes, market instruments, marketing plans and labelling schemes.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, local cooperatives	2030
3.4.2. Undertake initiatives to raise awareness on environmental, economic and social benefits of consuming local products, including in the tourism sector.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, civil society, local cooperatives	2030
3.4.3. Develop and strengthen agriculture based on agro-ecological and organic technologies, including organic, labelled, and conservation agricultures, controlling and limiting the use of genetically modified organisms, with special support to small-scale farmers.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, rural communities, local cooperatives, private sector	2030

Objective 4: Plan-and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities

Vision and Actions

~~83.~~84. While the SDGs are global in their ambition, their achievement will depend on the ability to transform them into reality at local level. With at least 65 per cent of SDG targets linked to the work and mandates of local and regional governments[93] the localization of the SDGs and a multilevel governance approach is a key accelerator for the 2030 Agenda implementation[94].

~~84.~~85. Although affected by the economic crisis, the urbanization of the Mediterranean population continues at a fast pace, in particular along its southern shores. Two in every three people are already living in the urban areas of Mediterranean countries, which is higher than the world average.

~~85.~~86. By around 2050, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme predicts that the urban population will grow to around 170 million in the countries on the northern shore (140 million in 2005) and to over 300 million to the south and east (151 million in 2005). This fact generates serious challenges: for example, by 2030 some 42 million additional dwellings will be required, mainly in cities.[28] In addition, notwithstanding, most Mediterranean cities, in particular those located on the coast, are not currently being managed sustainably, particularly in relation to the carrying capacity of those coasts. They are insufficiently resilient in terms of coping with natural and human-made risks and hazards, including climate change and the increasing level of risks due to climate change impacts mainly flooding and storm surges. At the same time, the potential of cities as drivers of innovative and sustainable social and economic change is insufficiently recognized. Cities have the potential to be laboratories to test and successfully apply engineering to adapt to climate change impacts, i.e. green infrastructure and Solutions based on Nature (SbN) to adapt to "urban heat island effect"; development of green - parks - and blue rivers corridors to generate coolness; design and architecture of buildings to use the effect of wind and increase natural coolness.

~~86.~~87. Mediterranean cities are insufficiently resilient in terms of coping with natural and human-made risks and hazards, including climate change. They are also highly energy-dependent, with low shares of renewable energy used, and their productive capacity in terms of renewable energy, urban agriculture and waste recycling is highly underutilized. Waste generation in the region has grown over the last decade, mostly due to a growing population and increased consumption. Waste management needs significant improvement: while three-quarters of waste is collected, most is disposed of in open dumps, which have negative health and environmental impacts. In 2020, the recycling rate is also widely varying. In the northern countries, the recycling rate rises to 46% in Slovenia, except in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a rate close to 0 (the rate for Israel is 25%). France, Italy and Greece are around 20 to 25%. Croatia, Spain and Cyprus are around 10-17%. Algeria, Lebanon, Malta, Montenegro, Monaco and Morocco are around 5 to 10% (MSSD dashboard indicator 20; 2023). In the Mediterranean, E-Wastes and hazardous wastes respectively represent 8 billion tons and 28 billion tons.[95] In addition, the participation of residents in decision-making on urban matters in many sub-national and local governments/ municipalities remains low, as does the level of access to urban services.

~~87.~~88. Urban growth prospects in the Mediterranean cities point towards an exacerbation of the current challenges: excessive land uptake; more rapid degradation of architectural heritage; aquifer pollution; inefficient and untreated waste management; atmospheric air pollution and noise; and the cumulative effect of all these factors on the environment and on human health. On this basis, if actions and initiatives aimed at correcting the impacts of urban territorial, environmental, economic and social imbalances are not taken, Mediterranean societies and ecosystems may suffer serious consequences, particularly in combination with the expected impacts of climate variability and change. Those are likely to impact most strongly the coastal zones of the Mediterranean, where the majority of the population lives in cities and in particular within the LEAC which are prone to coastal flooding.

~~88.~~89. Sound policies in favor of social and territorial cohesion in rural areas, which are addressed under Objective 3, are also necessary for ensuring sustainable urban development. Urban sustainability is linked to food security and sustainable forms of rural development: poor rural conditions have strong social and

[93] UN, Inter-agency Policy Briefs on Accelerating Progress on the 2030 Agenda from Local to Global levels: The Critical Importance of SDG Localization, July 2024
[94] UN-Habitat, Multi governance for SDGs localization, December 2022
[95] 2020 State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers (SoED 2020)

political impacts also on cities, as urban areas are largely populated by rural migrants.

~~89.~~90. Cities are critical for sustainable development in the Mediterranean, because they are engines of economic development, innovation and creativity: the climate friendly cities agenda is an example of the potential of urban areas to contribute to sustainability. For those reasons, a new, sustainable and creative approach to planning and managing Mediterranean urban agglomerations, offering longer- term sustainable solutions, and building on common aspirations and understandings among the relevant stakeholders, is the best hope for the Mediterranean cities' future.

~~90.~~91. Urban green and blue areas in the city have a multitude of positive environmental and socio- cultural functions: mitigating environmental pressures, improving aesthetics, reducing the urban heat island effect, mitigating flooding, and providing direct or indirect urban ecosystem services. Urban green and blue areas, or 'green and blue infrastructures' are networks of natural and engineered ecological systems providing a diverse range of services to increase the resilience of urban systems. While the simple addition of a green area could have a minor effect on the global city sustainability, and a park planned in an inaccessible area would not satisfy the needs of citizens, while requiring many resources to be managed, the same park could acquire greater value if its resultant overall potential ecosystem services (including water management) are taken into account. Several urban best management practices can be applied in Mediterranean cities. Moreover, urban regeneration projects and new urban settlements may also be planned and designed on the basis of urban best management practices related to multifunctional green and blue infrastructure. This will contribute to the transition to environments which are more resilient to changing future conditions.

Objective 4: Plan-and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities		
Targets	**Indicators**	
	Regional	**Global**
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators **UNEP/MAP System other indicators**	**SDGs**
Target 11: By 2030, all Mediterranean countries have substantially reduced waste generation through prevention, recycling and reuse, particularly by ensuring that at least 60% of municipal solid waste is sustainably recycled, composted or managed, including separate collection and material recovery, including biowaste, with emphasis on packaging waste and on the most environmentally damaging SUP products as a priority.	**MSSD Dashboard Indicator 20** Waste generated and treated by type of waste and treatment type National recycling rate, tons of material recycled	**SDG 11,** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable **Indicator 11.6.1,** Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities out of total municipal waste generated, by cities **SDG 12,** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns **Indicator 12.5.1,** National recycling rate, tons of material recycled
Target 12: By 2030, Contracting Parties have adopted regulatory and policy frameworks with ambitious health-based standards for indoor and outdoor air quality. in line with the World Health Organization (WHO).	**MSSD Core indicator 9** Air quality: **a)** concentration of PM2.5**; b)** carbon monoxide emission	**SDG 11,** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable **Indicator 11.6.2,** Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted)

~~91.~~92. The Strategy addresses pressures on the environment caused by urban sprawl, particularly in coastal areas, where in some cases triggered by tourism development (strategic direction 4.1). The proposed solutions include strengthening the development of small and medium sized towns as focal points for sustainable regional development, and monitoring and control of coastal urbanization and encroachment. The Strategy underlines the need for strong regulations and tools for spatial planning and tourism. It calls for the promotion of blue and green infrastructure, safe and green public open spaces, which will provide urban ecosystem services that will contribute to improved resilience to climate change and variability. This requires use of spatial planning systems, capacity building and sharing of best practices at the national level, as well as the preparation of regional guidelines for planning multi-functional green and blue infrastructures in the Mediterranean. A flagship initiative promotes and implements the "Environment Friendly City" Award, as per Decision IG.22/19 by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP19 Athens Greece, 9-12 February 2016), complemented by the flagship initiative Mediterranean Network of Zero Net Cities.

Strategic direction 4.1: Apply holistic and integrated spatial planning processes and other related instruments, as well as improved compliance with respective rules and regulations, to increase economic, social and territorial cohesion and reduce pressures on the environment		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		

Strategic direction 4.1: Apply holistic and integrated spatial planning processes and other related instruments, as well as improved compliance with respective rules and regulations, to increase economic, social and territorial cohesion and reduce pressures on the environment		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
4.1.1. Utilize spatial planning systems and land management instruments for sustainable urban/coastal planning and balanced development in urban areas that incorporate measures for infrastructure provision, and land- take reduction where possible, as well as the provision of multifunctional urban green and blue infrastructures, which provide urban ecosystem services that are also important for climate change adaptation.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities	2030
4.1.2. Ensure that legally-binding instruments for tourism development are put in place for those areas that suffer from tourism pressures, and related real-estate expansion and coastal deterioration.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, planning authorities	2030
4.1.3. Strengthen small and medium- sized towns as focal points for regional development that will reduce population pressures on urban agglomerations, including by ensuring appropriate transport links from major urban centres to medium and small ones.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society	2030
4.1.4. Promote the protection, upgrading and creation of additional public open space that is safe, green and shady, and part of a network of green infrastructure.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society	2035
Regional		
4.1.5. Monitor coastal urbanization and encroachment at regional level and provide monitoring support to national and local authorities.	Regional and international institutions, national governments, local authorities, planning authorities	2035
4.1.6. Establish a regional process to build capacity and share good practices on improving compliance with spatial planning regulations.	Regional and international institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society	2030
4.1.7. Set up a process to prepare regional guidelines for planning multifunctional nature-based solutions green and blue infrastructures, and provide opportunities for exchange of related urban best management practices.	Regional and international institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
4.1.8. Identify Mediterranean urban biodiversity hotspots and share experiences on their protection.	International and regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society	2030

~~92.~~93. The Strategy promotes participation of urban populations in planning and decision-making to support sustainable urban planning and management (strategic direction 4.2). In this respect securing the flow of

information and enhancing capacities for participation are key. At the national level, participatory mechanisms will be established, and governance regimes put in place that allow urban jurisdictions to regulate, register and manage land, within a rights-based framework. In addition, planning measures will support the development of urban models upgrading informal settlements within the urban fabric through forward-looking territorial planning. Regional networks of cities will be developed or strengthened, and a sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean (flagship initiative) will be developed in cooperation with these networks. This will help as to ensure that Mediterranean cities are planned cities to be inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Strategic direction 4.2: Encourage inclusive urbanization and strengthen capacities for participatory and integrated human settlement planning and management		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
4.2.1. Strengthen urban governance by establishing communication and participatory mechanisms to enhance urban stakeholders' involvement and engagement in decision-making.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil Society private sector	2035
4.2.2. Upgrade informal settlements into cities and anticipate the expected rates of urban growth through more balanced territorial planning and the provision of decent and affordable housing.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society	2035
4.2.3. Put in place governance regimes that allow urban jurisdictions to regulate, register and manage land, within a rights-based framework.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society	2035
Regional		
4.2.4. Develop or strengthen regional networking and partnership programmes and regional/sub/regional projects between cities and at the city-region level around the Mediterranean to promote knowledge-sharing and capacity building on sustainable cities.	Regional and international institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society	2035

~~93.~~94. The Strategy focuses on the protection and rehabilitation of historic urban centres as a means to retain population and economic activity, against the trend of increased dereliction and marginalization, based on fiscal and planning incentives (strategic direction 4.3). It also focuses on creating opportunities to strengthen local distinctive character both in planning and in project development in order to enhance local attractiveness. This recognises that retaining the distinctiveness of territories has a potential for economic development and competitive advantage. The Strategy recommends developing or strengthening existing networks of historic cities, involving economic players, including the tourism sector and that representing traditional industries. In addition adequate social dwelling provision coupled with fiscal incentives and the rehabilitation of historic centres could enhance the attractiveness of the historic stock in comparison with peripheral urban expansions. At a regional level, networking between historic centres and connecting them to economic activities are promoted as a means to secure viability.

Strategic direction 4.3: Promote the protection and rehabilitation of historic urban areas		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
4.3.1. Utilize forms of integrated and sustainable rehabilitation of historic urban centres, building on good practices to maintain the population in historic centres.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2030
4.3.2. Provide fiscal and planning incentives to utilize and rehabilitate historic urban centres.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities	2030

Strategic direction 4.3: Promote the protection and rehabilitation of historic urban areas		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
4.3.3. Create opportunities to strengthen local distinctive character both in planning and in project development in order to enhance local attractiveness, as a tool for economic development and enhancing competitive advantage.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities	2035
4.3.4. Provide adequate social housing coupled with fiscal incentives and the rehabilitation of historic centres to enhance the attractiveness of the historic housing stock in comparison with peripheral urban expansions.	National governments, local authorities, planning authorities	2030
Regional		
4.3.5. Develop or strengthen existing networks of historic cities in the Mediterranean, involving economic players, including the tourism sector and that representing traditional industries.	International and regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2030

~~94.~~95. Solid and liquid waste production and management remain major concerns in many urban regions in the Mediterranean (strategic direction 4.4). The Strategy promotes national measures for implementing innovative waste management solutions, in line with the waste hierarchy: prevention, reduction, reuse, sorting, recycling, recovery, and, as the least preferred option, disposal. It is also a priority to foster sustainable consumption patterns among citizens and develop behavioral change schemes that will lead to reduction in waste volumes and to develop legal and financial frameworks to support sustainable waste management. At the regional level, an assessment of the effectiveness high-tech and low-tech solutions (flagship initiative), including but not limited to awareness-raising and economic measures that have been implemented, will be carried out with a view to their more widespread utilization in waste reduction efforts. Finally the Strategy also includes a regional action to develop a database of generated and treated waste and related material flows.

Strategic direction 4.4: Promote sustainable production, use of sustainable products and effective waste management within the context of a more circular economy, as well as foster sustainable consumption patterns among citizens		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
4.4.1. Implement innovative, integrated and sustainable production, use of sustainable products and efficient waste management solutions, in line with the life cycle assessment, extended producer responsibility and waste hierarchy: prevention, reduction, reuse, sorting, recycling, recovery, and disposal.	National governments, local authorities/municipalities, civil society, private sector[96]	2035
4.4.2. Develop schemes to encourage and educate local communities to change their behavior with regard to the use of products and waste, and raise awareness on consumption patterns	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035

[96] Comment by Greece to highlight the distinction with Strategic Directions 5.4.1 and 5.4.3 that address mainly business

Strategic direction 4.4: Promote sustainable production, use of sustainable products and effective waste management within the context of a more circular economy, as well as foster sustainable consumption patterns among citizens		
4.4.3. Develop legal and financial frameworks for sustainable production and waste management.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
4.4.4. Embed Sustainable Urban Planning and Green Building awareness in School and VET Education Programs and Curricula. Promote education on sustainable transport, green infrastructure, and energy-efficient urban design. Encourage schools and community involvement in sustainable city planning initiatives.[97]	National governments, Educational Institutions, Academia, VET Institutions, Environmental Education Centers, local authorities	2030
Regional		
4.4.5. Develop robust database of generated and treaded waste and related material flows.	Regional organizations, national governments	2030

~~95.~~96. Many Mediterranean cities have increased their dependence on private vehicles, an increase that is further aggravated by urban sprawl, leading to pollution, congestion, high economic and social costs and land sealing for traffic management and parking. The Strategy, under strategic direction 4.5, calls for a reduced dependence on private vehicles by developing efficient integrated public transport systems between coastal cities and their functional regions. It recommends also to anticipate future transport needs, to be provided mainly by collective forms of transport, accompanied by economic and regulatory instruments, and increase virtual connectivity. At the regional level, the development of a sustainable transport and mobility framework for the Mediterranean is included.

[97] Comment by Cyprus

Strategic direction 4.5: Promote urban spatial patterns and technological options that reduce the demand for transportation, improve urban air quality and stimulate sustainable mobility and accessibility in urban areas		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
4.5.1. Redesigning transportation offer by promoting alternatives to individual cars, put in place spatial planning provisions that reduce the need for personal private mobility, and improve urban air quality	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
4.5.2. Reduce urban traffic congestion and pollution through economic and regulatory instruments promoting low- pollution collective transport systems at the local urban level, maritime public transport (blue ways), multi-modal links, and more sustainable freight transport.	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
4.5.3. Increase virtual connectivity at least to basic services in order to reduce the need to travel.	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
Regional		
4.5.4. Develop a sustainable Mediterranean transport and mobility framework, taking into account the objectives of the European Union transport policy and other relevant regional initiatives, including guidelines for compact cities, in order to minimize transport and service delivery costs and improve urban air quality.	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society	2035

~~96.~~97. The Strategy promotes green buildings, including the retro-fitting of the existing building stock, alternative building materials, reshaping housing organization patterns to contribute towards reducing the ecological footprint of the built environment (strategic direction 4.6). At a national level, various instruments are to be put in place to construct green buildings and retrofit existing buildings (e.g. institutional and legal arrangements, strategies, support schemes, training programmes, and standards). At a regional level, the Strategy focuses on the development of regional standards, certification and quality frameworks to encourage green buildings suitable for the Mediterranean climate. These regional standards and frameworks will provide guidance to national level efforts to encourage green buildings suitable for the local environment.

Strategic direction 4.6: Promote green infrastructures and renewable energies and improve energy efficiency to contribute towards reducing the ecological footprint of the built environment		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
4.6.1. Put in place institutional and legal arrangements, strategies, support schemes, training programmes and standards to construct green buildings ~~r~~retrofit existing buildings and improve energy efficiency	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, civil society, private sector, professional associations (architects, civil engineers)	2030
4.6.2 Ensure green transitions for cities in terms of using alternative building materials, reshaping housing organization patterns with regards to Nature based solutions (NBS) and improve energy efficiency	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector, professional associations (architects, civil engineers)	2035
Regional		

4.6.3. Develop regional/sub-regional standards, certification and quality frameworks to encourage green and improved energy efficiency buildings suitable for the Mediterranean climate.	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector, professional associations	2035

~~97.~~98. Urban areas, particularly those situated close to the coast, are vulnerable to natural and human- induced disasters and large-scale changes, including climate change. Strategic direction 4.7 focuses on enhancing urban resilience, in order to reduce their vulnerability to risks from natural and human- induced hazards including climate change. Besides the regional measures relating to emergency- preparedness, the Strategy also highlights a number of actions required to be undertaken by cities with regard to resilience. At a national level, climate proofing is addressed in the implementation of programmes increasing urban resilience. National guidelines for planning of green and blue infrastructure will be prepared, which will also support urban level climate change adaptation plans. The third national action involves the preparation and implementation of action plans to improve urban resilience to natural and human induced risks, including through natural solutions, smart development and awareness-raising. A fourth national action focuses on undertaking a set of integrated measures to support the productivity of cities in terms of energy production, composting and urban and peri-urban agriculture, including through the recognition of such activities as urban land uses and economic activities, ensuring that necessary health safeguards are in place. At the regional level, the Strategy calls for an inventory of local authorities in the region which are developing natural risk response mechanisms.

Strategic direction 4.7: Enhance urban resilience in order to reduce vulnerability to risks from natural and human-induced hazards including climate change		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
4.7.1. Ensure urban spatial plans are subject to climate proofing.	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
4.7.2. Develop national guidelines for auditing and planning of green and blue infrastructure, with reference to natural and human-induced risks, including climate change.	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, private sector, civil society	2035
4.7.3. Prepare and implement action plans, based on prevention, preparedness and response approaches, to improve urban resilience to natural and human induced risks, including through natural solutions, smart development and awareness-raising.	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, civil society	2035
4.7.4. Undertake a set of integrated measures to support the productivity of cities in terms of energy production, composting and urban and peri-urban agriculture, including through the recognition of such activities as urban land uses and economic activities, while ensuring that necessary environmental health safeguards are in place.	National governments, local authorities, urban planning authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
Regional		
4.7.5. Set up an inventory of Mediterranean local authorities developing natural risk response mechanisms, including climate change adaptation actions and relevant good practices.	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society	2030

Objective 5: Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance

Vision and Actions

~~98.~~99. The green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication has attracted much attention from the international community at a time when the financial crisis, geo politic developments and climate change impacts are seriously affecting socio-economic development. A green economy – called blue economy when applied to the coastal, marine and maritime sectors of the Mediterranean35 – is one that promotes sustainable development whilst improving human well-being and social equity, and significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. In other words, a green economy promotes resilient, low-carbon, resource-efficient and socially-inclusive economic development.

~~99.~~100. The circular economy offers a transformative approach that prioritizes the continual reduction, reuse, refurbishment, and recycling of products and materials. A circular economy in the blue and green sectors refers to a sustainable economic framework that integrates ecological principles into economic activities, emphasizing the responsible use of natural resources, minimizing waste, and fostering regeneration. In the blue economy, this involves sustainable practices in marine and aquatic systems, ensuring that fishery and marine resource extraction is done responsibly to protect ocean health. In the green economy, it encompasses land-based systems where agricultural practices, renewable energy sources, and resource management prioritize environmental restoration, biodiversity, and carbon footprint reduction.

~~100.~~101. Together, these approaches create a resilient and integrated economy that balances economic growth with sustainable development, increasing environmental resilience, and fostering socio-economic benefits for all, including women and youth, such as job creation and innovation.

~~101.~~102. A Mediterranean circular green and blue economy will generate sustainable development and employment through public and private investments, while reducing carbon emissions and pollution, enhancing energy and resource efficiency, and preventing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The related sustainable investments would be catalysed by targeted public and private expenditure, innovative policy and regulatory changes, awareness, training and research initiatives, innovation and the uptake of new technologies and processes, progressive tax and job reforms, the promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns in general, as well as by increasing the role of social enterprises.

~~102.~~103. This green development path would maintain, enhance and, where necessary, rebuild natural capital as a critical economic asset and a source of public benefits, especially for people whose livelihoods and security depend heavily on natural resources. Indeed, the Arab Forum for Environment and Development, in advocating a development model rooted in a green economy as a sound foundation for addressing the shortcomings of Arab economies, also emphasizes the efficient use and deployment of natural assets to diversify the economy, which in turn provides immunity against the volatilities and recessionary pressures of the global economy.

~~103.~~104. This objective related to the transition towards a circular green and blue economy is crucial for the achievement of the Strategy's vision. These new paradigms are likely to illuminate the paths for the necessary decoupling between prosperity and use of resources, and to provide credible responses to the sustainability challenges being faced today. In addition, through its first objective on coastal and marine areas, the Strategy promotes the blue economy concept through strong partnership between maritime sectors and public authorities in regard to the sustainable and equitable use of marine and coastal areas and resources.

~~104.~~105. The green economy explicitly includes the objectives of job creation and social inclusion, in order to promote a more healthy and just society. The social economy, including cooperatives and the voluntary sector, has an important role to play in the green economy. In addition, the active participation of all relevant stakeholders in the necessary transition would be guaranteed in an efficient, consistent and transparent manner, engaging with local communities and respecting cultural contexts. The link with the Strategy's sixth objective on Governance, another cross-cutting objective, is therefore fundamental in facilitating the transition to the green economy. Making the transition to green development will not be a one-time event. Rather, it must be viewed as a long and demanding process guided both by top-down policy prescription as well as bottom-up public participation. This approach will give the ecological transition the political and social legitimacy needed to ensure the wide-scale mobilization of efforts required.

~~105.~~106. A key pillar of the transition to a green and blue economy is finance that supports green and sustainable activities. The terms green and sustainable are often used together in the context of investment, but they represent distinct but complementary concepts. Green investments focus specifically on environmental benefits—such as reducing carbon emissions, conserving biodiversity, or investing in renewable energy solutions. These are targeted towards addressing environmental challenges and directly supporting the transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy. On the other hand, sustainable

investments take a broader view. They not only consider environmental factors but also incorporate social and governance elements (known as ESG factors). Sustainable investments aim to achieve a balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection, thus ensuring long-term resilience and prosperity. Mediterranean countries require green and sustainable investments and related economic tools to support their transformation and adapt/mitigate climate and environmental change. To achieve this, it is essential to establish a common regional Framework for Green and Sustainable Investments in the Mediterranean. It is also essential to progressively phase-out harmful policies and economic tools, such as environmentally harmful subsidies (EHS), as highlighted by UNEP/MAP & Plan Bleu 2024) while addressing the barriers and challenges that hinder the adoption of greener financial strategies. At the same time, identifying opportunities to enhance green and sustainable finance and related economic instruments will be crucial in promoting sustainability. Additionally, fostering inclusive, multi-level engagement between public and private stakeholders is essential in shaping green finance initiatives, including the involvement of banks and financial institutions in the definition of a sustainable investment system for the Mediterranean. Financial strategies should also reflect societal needs and strengthen community resilience to ensure a just and effective transition.

Objective 5: Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance		
Targets	**Indicators**	
	Regional	**Global**
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators **UNEP/MAP System other indicators**	**SDGs**
Target 13: By 2030, Contracting Parties have in place effective regulatory and policy frameworks, including economic incentives, aimed at facilitating the development of sustainable business models that integrate circularity and eco-innovation principles in the green and blue economies, while contributing to the development of non-pollutant and socially inclusive economies, in line with the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan for the Mediterranean.	**NEW Indicator ~~Option 1~~:** Percentages of companies per International Standard Industrial Classification SIC codes sustainability reports **NEW Indicator ~~Option 2~~:** Number of Mediterranean countries that have implemented the regional SCP Action Plan	**SDG 12**, Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns **Indicator 12.6.1,** Number of companies publishing sustainability reports
Target 14: By 2035 Contracting Parties have established sustainable finance frameworks that mobilize capital towards green and sustainable investments, while fostering collaboration among all stakeholders.	**NEW Indicator:** Number of Mediterranean Countries established a sustainable finance framework	No corresponding SDGs

~~106.~~107. Addressing socio-economic inequalities between and within countries, owing partly to the high unemployment rate, is a key concern for the green economy. The creation of green and~~,~~ just~~fair and~~ jobs for all is therefore critical, in particular for youth and women (strategic direction 5.1). New jobs would be gender-inclusive and provide social solidarity mechanism to workers. The Strategy includes an action to strengthen the role of green jobs in eradicating poverty and enhancing social inclusion through skills assessment and gap analysis for green jobs, which will help develop tailored capacity-development programmes. At an international level, the compilation and dissemination of best practice guidelines, including harmonised regional definitions, to promote the growth in green jobs and green and social entrepreneurship is envisaged.

Strategic direction 5.1: Create green, just and decent jobs for all, particularly youth and women, to eradicate poverty and enhance social inclusion		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
5.1.1. Undertake a skills assessment and gap analysis considering the advances in digitalization and AI, monitor and forecast demand for green jobs to strengthen the role of green jobs in eradicating poverty and enhancing social inclusion.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2030
5.1.2. Develop training and capacity building programmes for green and digital skills and green jobs, particularly for youth and women.	National governments, local authorities, regional institutions, civil society, private sector, academia, education institutions	2030
5.1.3. Raise awareness, particularly among decision-makers, about the potential of the circular-economy transition to promote resilient, low- carbon, resource-efficient and socially- inclusive economic development.	National governments, National and Regional Parliaments, local authorities, regional institutions, civil society, private sector, academia	2035
5.1.4. Foster labour justice and gender mainstreaming within green jobs strategies and policy instruments	National governments, local authorities, civil society, academia, private sector	2035
Regional		
5.1.54. Compile and disseminate best practice guidelines, including harmonised regional definitions, to promote the growth in green jobs and green and social entrepreneurship	Regional institutions, national, governments, specialised agencies	2035
5.1.65 Develop and implement strategies to secure funding and establish financial instruments and mechanisms aimed at promoting green jobs	Regional institutions, national, governments, specialised agencies	2035

~~107.~~108. Fundamental changes in the way societies consume and produce are indispensable for achieving sustainable development. Therefore the Strategy is complemented by the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan for the Mediterranean. The Action Plan highlights four priority areas of consumption and production, namely food, agriculture and fisheries; goods manufacturing; tourism; and, housing and construction.

~~108.~~109. In the priority area of food, agriculture and fisheries, operational objectives are provided on: the promotion of best environmental practices, technologies and innovation in growing and harvesting; set-up of sustainable business models across different sectors; policy and legal frameworks to promote sustainable agriculture, fisheries and food production and consumption; the education of food producers, retailers and consumers; and, support to the development of appropriate market tools and information to promote sustainability.

~~109.~~110. In the priority area of goods manufacturing, operational objectives are provided on: the integration of best available technologies and practices throughout the value chain of goods production; integrated policy-making and legal framework to promote sustainable consumption, production and recovery, to move towards a circular economy; and, raising awareness of consumers and stakeholders and supporting the development of market structures, increasing the visibility and market share of sustainable and alternative goods and services.

~~110.~~111. With respect to tourism, the Action Plan provides operational objectives addressing: practices and solutions for efficient use of natural resources and reducing the environmental impacts of tourism, respecting the carrying capacities of the destination; regulatory, legislative and financial measures to mainstream sustainable consumption and production in tourism to reduce tourism seasonality and promote

local community engagement and empowerment; and, awareness, capacities and skills to support sustainable destinations and green tourism services, and marketing schemes for a competitive and sustainable Mediterranean tourism sector.

~~111.~~112. Finally, for the priority area on housing and construction, the ~~draft~~ Action Plan provides operational objectives on the following topics: innovation, knowledge and integration of best available technologies and environmental practices for achieving resource efficiency throughout the life cycle of a building; regulatory and legal frameworks to enhance the contribution of housing and construction to sustainable development, social integration and cohesion; and, awareness-raising and capacity- building with stakeholders in urban planning, housing and construction to mainstream sustainable urban development.

~~112.~~113. The implementation of the action plan, thus strategic direction 5.2, will be secured through awareness raising programmes on sustainable lifestyles targeting the wider public. Regional capacity building to support countries in implementing the Action Plan is also envisaged.

Strategic direction 5.2: Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, to support the shift towards circular economy approaches and sustainable business models		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
5.2.1. Implement the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan for the Mediterranean.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector, academia	2035
5.2.2. Undertake awareness-raising and education programmes on sustainable lifestyles for promoting sustainable behaviour and increase the understanding of the benefits of circularity and sustainable consumption among citizens.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, educational Institutions, Environmental Education ESD Centers[98]	2030
5.2.3 Foster the set-up of sustainable business models across different sectors	National governments, local authorities, private sector, civil society	2035
Regional		
5.2.4. Carry out capacity building programme to support countries in implementing the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan for the Mediterranean.	UNEP/MAP, SCP/RAC	2035

~~113.~~114. A large part of the pollution in the Mediterranean is due to inefficient industrial processes and poor management of waste. Apart from harming the environment and health, it also jeopardizes the competitiveness and long-term sustainability of industries. Strategic direction 5.3 promotes resource efficiency and eco-innovation as critical tools to allow businesses and economies to be more productive, while reducing cost, waste and use of raw materials. Promoting labour justice and gender mainstreaming in the circular blue and green sectors is crucial to ensure a sustainable and just development in the Mediterranean region. Creating and connecting green and social incubators and training programmes, including through partnerships between universities, businesses and research centres at national and regional scales is also necessary. At a regional level, a Mediterranean network of green and social incubators and training programmes is envisaged. A flagship initiative to create a Mediterranean business award for environmental innovation is also included.

[98] Comment by Cyprus

Strategic direction 5.3: Encourage innovation, public private partnerships and sustainable ~~business~~ solutions to advance towards the objectives of a just low-carbon, circular, green and blue economy		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
5.3.1. Adopt regulatory and economic incentives to foster sustainable business models that integrate circular economy principles and Increase capacity for eco- innovation in the industry and service sectors, and the adoption of of eco-design principles that extend all along the lifecyle of products through circular economy models, including to promote market uptake.	National governments, civil society, academia, private sector	2035
5.3.2. Support networks of Business Support Organizations (BSOs and circular economy hubs adopting sustainable and circular approaches for businesses and entrepreneurs.	National governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035
5.3.3. Promote and support collaborative partnerships between universities, businesses and research centres, civil society organizations (CSOs) and public institutions fostering cooperation to drive innovation	National governments, local authorities, civil society, academia, private sector	2035
~~5.3.4. Promoting labor justice in the circular green and blue economy~~	~~National governments, local authorities, civil society, academia, private sector~~	~~2035~~
~~5.3.5. Promote policies and enact legislation fostering gender mainstreaming within the circular economy sector~~	~~National governments, local authorities, civil society, academia, private sector~~	~~2035~~
Regional		
5.3.6. Create a regional/sub-regional of circular economy incubators including social innovation, and training programmes and enhance the capacities and networks of Business Support Organizations [BSOs] for sustainable business development	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector	2035

~~114.~~115. Misallocation of capital contributes to the development of inefficient, underused and environmentally-harmful infrastructure. The Strategy promotes the integration of sustainability principles and criteria into decision-making on public and private investment through the provision of tools and guidelines (strategic direction 5.4), while addressing externalities are often not sufficiently addressed by markets and policies, creating misleading price signals and incentives for business-as-usual practices linked to a high-carbon economy and by integrating the polluter-pays principle extended producer responsibility and payment for ecosystem services based on economic valuation. This is linked to strategic direction 2.2 under the marine and coastal areas objective. The integration of sustainability principles into public procurement at national and local levels and promoting key instruments such as eco-design criteria and the environmental certification of products and services are also envisaged, together with the promotion to extended producer responsibility. In the public sector, governments can lead by example by implementing policies that require sustainability assessments for public investments. This could include evaluating projects based on their potential for promoting circularity, minimizing waste, and reducing carbon emissions. At the regional level, capacity-building is required, in addition to improved dialogue with international donors for securing the mainstreaming of economic and social criteria in investments, including capacity- building on market instruments and on integrating the polluter- pays principle. This holistic approach encourages investments in technologies and practices that support a circular economy, such as renewable energy, waste reduction, and resource efficiency, ultimately leading to long-term benefits for both investors and communities. Finally, a flagship initiative focuses on the integration of sustainability principles into public procurement at national and local levels.

Strategic direction 5.4: Promote the integration of sustainability, circularity and climate change principles and criteria ~~into decision-making~~ on the programming and evaluation frameworks of public and private investment		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
5.4.1. Promote environmental fiscal[99] reform to reduce tax on labour and integrate the polluter-pays principle ~~and extended producer responsibility~~ into finance policy.	National governments	2030
5.4.2. Establish clear sustainability, circularity and climate change criteria for evaluating public and private investments, ensuring that financial flows prioritize resource efficiency, low-carbon innovation, and environmental impact reduction	National governments, private sector, civil society	2030
5.4.3. Promote extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) or similar mechanisms that enhances resource efficiency, waste reduction, and product lifecycle accountability, encouraging industries to design products that are durable, repairable, and recyclable	National governments, private sector, civil society	2030
5.4.4. Raise the awareness of financial actors on the need to mainstream environmental and social impact assessments prior to investments decisions by providing tools and guidelines and enhancing capacities.	National governments, private sector, civil society	2035
5.4.5. Promote eco-design criteria covering the whole lifecycle of products and environmental certification of products and services.	National governments, academia, private sector	2035
Regional		
5.4.6. Provide assistance to countries interested in integrating the polluter- pays principle, extended producer responsibility and payments for ecosystem services into national finance policies.	International institutions, national governments, private sector	2030
5.4.7. Build capacity of national agencies on sustainable investment and promotion corporate social responsibility in private sector, including corporate environmental responsibility.	International institutions, national governments and agencies, private sector	2030
5.4.8. Initiate or strengthen dialogue with international funding institutions with a view to obtaining a commitment regarding the use of environmental and social criteria for investments.	International institutions, national governments, private sector	2035

~~115.~~116. Mediterranean countries require green and sustainable finance and related economic tools to support the necessary transition of the region, particularly to adapt to the impacts of climate and environmental change. To successfully drive this transition, they need a compelling and forward-looking vision that engages the relevant stakeholders at all levels, and fosters support for green and sustainable finance and economic policies. This vision should promote a positive and proactive approach to foster public and private investments that cater to regional, national, and local needs, while ensuring sustainable economic development and enhancing societal well-being, in line with the Strategic Directions (SD) of the MSSD. A deeper understanding of the current landscape of green and sustainable finance and related economic tools in the Mediterranean is thus essential. This includes three elements: the mapping of existing financial

[99] Change proposed by EcoUnion

instruments with recommendations for scaling up the most effective ones in term of sustainability; the scoping of economic activities in the Mediterranean that contribute to sustainability (taxonomy); and the identification of environmentally harmful subsidies in economic sectors that affect the Mediterranean region. This would constitute the Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance, which should be supported by concrete, actionable steps to ensure sustainability while addressing social and employment challenges (green and blue jobs). Mediterranean countries must first tackle the barriers and challenges they face in developing and implementing greener financial strategies. In this context, it is crucial to identify opportunities to enhance green and sustainable finance and related economic tools to promote sustainability. The lack of data and structured finance strategies in some countries underscores the heterogeneity across the region, making the creation of a Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance essential for coherent and effective action. Additionally, coherence between public and private financial mechanisms and flows is necessary to ensure that sustainable strategies and action plans are effectively implemented. Finally, Mediterranean countries must engage in discussions about interconnections and synergies between economic, environmental, and social priorities and involve all relevant stakeholders, national and local, in a cross-cutting, inclusive decision-making process to drive the green and sustainable transition forward.

Strategic direction 5.5: Promote an integrated financial ecosystem through a Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance aiming to foster the channeling of private and public capital into sustainable investments.

Actions	Responsible Actors	Time frame
National		
5.5.1. Develop national Frameworks for Green and Sustainable Finance identifying financial and policy instruments (e.g., green and blue bonds, concessional loans, grants, investment funds, tax incentives for accelerating the sustainable transition, and climate risk insurance) to facilitate financial flows to sustainable investments, while supporting adaptation, resilience-building, and considering social implications and acceptability.	National governments, local authorities, financial institutions	2030
5.5.2. Develop national green and sustainable finance networks bringing together different stakeholders (e.g. financial institutions, governments, private sector, academia, and NGOs) to enhance collaboration, share best practices, and facilitate knowledge exchange on green and sustainable finance.	National governments, local authorities, financial institutions, private sector, academia	2030
Regional		
5.5.3. Develop a Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance that incorporates Mediterranean-specific challenges and priorities to guide investments in green and sustainable projects, particularly on adaptation, taking into account national priorities.	Regional institutions, national authorities, regional/international donors, Plan Bleu	2030
5.5.4. Develop a Mediterranean-wide sustainable finance network connecting financial institutions, governments, private sector, academia, and NGOs to foster cross-border collaboration and accelerate sustainable investment (supporting both adaptation and mitigation efforts).	Regional institutions, financial institutions, governments, private sector, academia, NGOs	2030
5.5.5. Develop and implement regional guidelines for green and sustainable budgeting practices to integrate environmental and climate objectives into both annual and multi-year national and regional budgets.	National governments, local authorities, regional/international institutions, Plan Bleu	2030
5.5.6. Identification of major strategic projects, including proposals by local communities, that are key	National governments, local authorities, financial	2030

Strategic direction 5.5: Promote an integrated financial ecosystem through a Mediterranean Framework for Green and Sustainable Finance aiming to foster the channeling of private and public capital into sustainable investments.		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
to enhance sustainability in the whole Mediterranean, with the aim to attract capital flow. .	institutions, private sector, academia, Plan Bleu	

Objective 6: Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.

Vision and Actions

~~116.~~117. Governance is a cross-cutting objective, relevant to each of the other objectives of the Strategy. This objective focuses on improving institutional capacities on sustainable development governance at the national level. Furthermore, the objective focuses in ensuring the full involvement of all stakeholders in promoting and achieving sustainable development at the regional, national and local level; for the latter. The objective considers the promotion of the role and reinforced awareness and capacities of local authorities in implementing the MSSD objectives, while aspects of governance related to the implementation of the Strategy are addressed in Chapter 3. Governance is characterized by the inclusion of non-state actors in the decision-making process, such as civil society, in particular local authorities, youth and women, financial institutions, private sector, and international organizations. This also involves new forms of cooperation arrangements, either at a national or at a transnational level, such as public-private partnerships. This multi-level governance, with different parallel yet interlinked rule-making systems, demands for a reinforced multi-stakeholder processes for supporting and monitoring policy development and implementation, while science-policy interface should also be further exploited to provide better information for decision-makers, also through a set of core indicators providing a summary of the major environmental and socio-economic challenges the Mediterranean faces, shedding light on the region's progress over the past three decades. The core indicators offers a perspective on the Mediterranean's evolution, reflecting the intricate interplay between education, health, economic vitality, environmental stewardship, and sustainability.

~~117.~~118. Governance issues in the Mediterranean range from endangered peace in the region, to inequalities among and within countries and weak public engagement, involvement and participation. Challenges for environmental governance include horizontal and vertical (due to lack of subsidiarity) fragmentation of responsibility for the environmental dossier, insufficient, uncoordinated and non- results-based planning, management~~-~~, implementation and monitoring, as well as weak human, technical and financial resources in the public sector, particularly at the local level. Finally, inadequate awareness and education, research and innovation, and sharing of knowledge and information, are also sustainable development governance challenges faced in Mediterranean countries.

~~118.~~119. Effective inclusive and efficient governance requires that participation in decision-making and cooperation to ensure social justice considerations are taken into account. Participation and cooperation need to be strengthened, and more sustainable development opportunities to address inequalities should be found. Governance has to be flexible and adaptive; it should devise new forms of institutions based on discussion and participation, as well as innovative legal conceptions and constructive practices directly related to sustainability governance, taking also into account the new digital world and the opportunities it offers.

~~119.~~120. Finally, wide variations in the development models of Mediterranean countries do not allow a “one policy for all” approach and therefore emphasis needs to be placed on their specific needs and contexts. Fragmentation of responsibility needs to be addressed through increased policy integration and coordination. Horizontal institutional reforms including, inter alia, legal, administrative and taxation reforms (such as green national accounting, green tax reform) and efforts to fight corruption, are some of the approaches to be considered. The science-policy interface should also be expanded to provide better information for decision-makers and the public.

Objective 6: Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.		
Targets	**Indicators**	
	Regional	**Global**
	MSSD Dashboard and Core indicators **UNEP/MAP System other indicators**	**SDGs**
Target 15: By 2030, Contracting Parties have formal~~[institutional]~~ mechanisms in place to ensure subsidiarity and synergies between policies at different levels of decision-making and across sectors in the long-term and across borders thus enhancing policy coherence on sustainable development (PCSD), including involvement of stakeholders.	**NEW Indicator:** Number of countries with mechanisms addressing marine and coastal environment subject to strategic environment impact assessment and policy consultation **NEW Indicator:** Number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development~~Number of countries with Institutional Coordination Mechanisms, including inter-ministerial committees~~	**SDG 17,** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development **Indicator 14.2.1.** Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to managing marine areas **Indicator 17.14.1,** Number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development
Target 16~~.~~: By 2030, ensure that all learners, including the general public, acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.	**MSSD Core indicator 3**, Average years of schooling **MSSD Dashboard Indicator 28**: Education for Sustainable Development Extent to which education for sustainable development is mainstreamed in the national education policies, curricula and teacher education	**SDG 4,** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all **Indicator 4.7.1,** Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (*a*) national education policies; (*b*) curricula; (*c*) teacher education and (*d*) student assessment
Target 17: By 2030, Contracting Parties have acceded to the Aarhus Convention.	**MSSD Dashboard Indicator 27**: Effective ~~P~~public participation and public access to environmental information Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information	**SDG 16,** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels **Indicator 16.10.2,** Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information

~~120.~~121. Strategic direction 6.1 addresses enhanced regional, sub-regional and cross-border dialogue, cooperation, and networking processes, including emergency-preparedness mechanisms. At the national level,

the Strategy focuses on preparedness / prevention plans and alert mechanisms in case of (natural and human-made) disasters, as well as adaptive actions. At the regional level, an action to strengthen regional dialogue through cooperation and networking, including on emergency- preparedness is included, along with an action to strengthen regional and sub-regional dialogue and cooperation to better understand the relationship between environmentally-sustainable development and the challenges and opportunities related to population flows.

Strategic direction 6.1: Enhance regional, sub-regional and cross-border dialogue and cooperation, including on emergency-preparedness		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
6.1.1. Strengthen preparedness / prevention and cooperation plans and alert mechanisms in case of (natural and human-made) disaster, as well as adaptive actions.	National governments, local authorities, civil society	2035
Regional		
6.1.2. Strengthen regional and sub- regional dialogue, cooperation and networking processes, including on emergency-preparedness.	National governments, international institutions, civil society	2035
6.1.3. Strengthen regional and sub- regional dialogue and cooperation in order to better understand the relationship between environmentally- sustainable development and the challenges and opportunities related to population flows.	International institutions, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society	2035

~~121.~~122. Strategic Direction 6.2 addresses strengthening the governance of the MSSD as crosscutting endeavor that concerns the systemic reinforcement of the role of sub-national and local governments/ municipalities, in the MSSD decision-making and implementation processes, in order to further promote and encourage stakeholders' engagement and action at local level as well as a stronger inclusive processes, therefore upscaling the impact of the MSSD on the ground.

Strategic direction 6.2: Strengthen the role, awareness and capacities of sub-national and local governments/ municipalities and of National and Regional Parliaments[100] for implementing national and subnational sustainable development strategies and thus contribute to the achievement of SDG and MSSD objectives		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
6.2.1. Strengthen the institutional capacity and of sub-national and local governments/ municipalities to integrate and implement the MSSD objectives, while Strengthening coordination and collaboration mechanisms with national governments/authorities	~~[~~National governments and sub-national and local government/municipalities~~]~~	2035
6.2.2. Enable the implementation of SDGs and MSSD objectives at the sub-national and local level through training programs aimed at public policy coherence	National governments and sub-national and local government/municipalities[101]	2035
6.2.3 Implement awareness campaigns for inclusive decision-making and participatory governance, also by strengthening ESD networks for policy understanding. [102]		2035
Regional		
6.2.4. Promote at regional level the exchange of best practices among sub-national and local governments/ municipalities on institutional capacity building for	Regional Conventions, National governments and sub-national and	2035

[100] Comment by PAM
[101] Comment by EcoUnion
[102] Comment by Cyprus

sustainable development and local stakeholders' engagement	local government/ municipalities	

~~122.~~123. The Strategy promotes the engagement of civil society, scientists, local communities, youth and women, financial institutions, private sector, and other stakeholders in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive processes and integrity in decision-making. Public participation is particularly important at the local level, which is the level of government closest to the people, and the level of decision-making where many environment-related decisions are taken. Increased public participation has to be achieved through support for national, sub-national and local governments and institutions by means of improved legal frameworks and human and financial resources, and has to include skills related to partnership- building, negotiation and conflict resolution. The Strategy also envisages support for and strengthening of the organizational capacity of local, national and regional stakeholders, including voluntary organizations, cooperatives, associations, networks, and producer groups, in terms of legal frameworks and human and financial resources. That will contribute to better decision-making, implementation of policies, plans and projects, and monitoring. At the regional level, accession to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) is encouraged as a flagship initiative.

~~123.~~124. The Strategy promotes the engagement of civil society, scientists, local communities youth and women, financial institutions, private sector in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive processes and integrity in decision-making (strategic direction 6. 3). Public participation is particularly important at the local level, which is the level of government closest to the people, and the level of decision-making where many environment-related decisions are taken. Increased public participation has to be achieved through support for national, sub-national and local governments and institutions by means of improved legal frameworks and human and financial resources, and has to include skills related to partnership- building, negotiation and conflict resolution. The Strategy also envisages support for and strengthening of the organizational capacity of local, national and regional stakeholders, including voluntary organizations, cooperatives, associations, networks, and producer groups, in terms of legal frameworks and human and financial resources. That will contribute to better decision-making, implementation of policies, plans and projects, and monitoring.

Strategic direction 6.3: Promote the engagement of civil society, scientists, youth and women, financial institutions, private sector, local communities and other stakeholders in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive whole of society processes and integrity in decision-making		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
6.3.1. Set up, where relevant, and strengthen the capacity of national governments sub-national and local authorities for public participation in terms of legal frameworks and human and financial resources	International institutions, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society	2035
1.3.2 Support and strengthen the capacity and awareness of local, and national stakeholders and non-state actors, also by strengthening ESD networks for civic engagement in sustainability projects[103]	National governments, local authorities, regional actors and initiatives, civil society	2035
6.3.3 Develop and implement policies that promote gender equality in coastal management and decision-making processes, including targeted training programs to build women's knowledge and skills in coastal resource management, fisheries, marine conservation, and environmental governance	National governments, civil society, academia	2035

~~124.~~125. The Strategy promotes implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements to guide actions at national and regional levels (strategic direction 6.4). It highlights the importance of ensuring policy coherence, based on mechanisms for inter-ministerial coordination and cross-sectoral planning. The Strategy promotes the implementation of the precautionary principle through instruments such as environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments. It encourages the support, through legal provisions where relevant, of partnerships in planning and

[103] Comment by Cyprus

implementation, including but not limited to private sector involvement, public-private partnerships, and innovative financing at regional (subnational) and/or local level. A flagship initiative is included to develop capacity-building programmes on issues related to implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements, including environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments.

Strategic direction 6.4: Promote the implementation, and monitoring of the SD Strategies at all levels of government, considering synergies and tradeoffs between different policies and sectors, including intersectional management (WEFE NEXUS) by improving policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) based on whole of government approach, inter-ministerial coordination and multi-level government		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
6.4.1. Ensure ratification, compliance and implementation of global and regional agreements related to environmental sustainability, to guide actions at national and regional levels.	International institutions, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society	2035
6.4.2. Ensure the adoption of the precautionary principle and its application by undertaking environmental impact assessments, strategic environmental assessments and other relevant procedures.	National governments, local authorities, academia, civil society, private sector	2035
6.4.3. Enhance inter-ministerial coordination and cross-sectoral planning and multi-level governance through policy coherence for sustainable development.	National governments, local authorities, civil society	2035
6.4.4. Encourage and support, through legal provisions where relevant, partnerships in planning and implementation, including but not limited to private sector involvement, public-private partnerships, and innovative financing at regional (subnational) and/or local level.	International institutions, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society, private sector	2035

~~125.~~126. The Strategy promotes education and research for sustainable development (strategic direction 6. 5). in particular through the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development37. The aim of the latter Strategy is to encourage Mediterranean countries to develop and incorporate education for sustainable development into their formal education systems, in all relevant subjects, in particular in green and blue economy sectors and circular economy related professions, as well as in non-formal and informal education. The objectives of this Strategy focus on the following aspects of education for sustainable development: policy, legislation and other regulatory and operational support frameworks; promotion through formal, non-formal and informal learning; equipping educators with the competence to include sustainable development in their teaching; accessible and adequate tools and materials; research and development; and, cooperation at all levels, including exchange of experience and technologies within the region.

~~126.~~127. The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development also includes an action to strengthen research capabilities in the area of sustainable development, as well as the science-policy interface. At the regional level, the Strategy underlines the value of large-scale programmes (e.g. European Union Horizon Europe Research Programmes) to promote sustainable development research and innovation, and the importance of encouraging and supporting partnerships amongst countries. It promotes also the exchange of good practices and knowledge in all aspects of education and learning for sustainable development.

6.5: Promote education and research for sustainable development		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		

6.5: Promote education and research for sustainable development		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
6.5.1. Implement the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, which promotes the integration of the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning, and taking in due account the United Nations' Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030[104]	Regional institutions, national governments, local authorities, civil society, academia and educators	2035
6.5.2. Strengthen knowledge and research capacity at the national level, through long-term provision of training opportunities, particularly in the green and blue economy sectors and circular economy related professions, transfer of knowledge and research infrastructure development.	International institutions, national governments, local authorities, educational and scientific communities, private sector, and civil society	2035
6.5.3. Strengthen the science-policy interface, to support decision making by scientific analysis and data, through research fora, seminars, and other opportunities for exchange, , and taking in due account the United Nations' Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030.	International institutions, national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society	2035
Regional		
6.5.4 Promote research and innovation by ensuring that large-scale programmes and initiatives (e.g. European Union Horizon Europe Research Programmes) take into account Mediterranean priorities for sustainable development.	International institutions, academia, civil society	2030

~~127.~~128. Strategic direction 6.6 addresses regional capabilities for information management in relation to scientific data on sustainable development and environment. In order to allow for appropriate knowledge-based decision- and policy-making, as well as policy foresight, national information centres will be established, which will collect existing and new information. Joint knowledge-creation and knowledge-sharing initiatives with stakeholders, including the scientific community, the private sector and civil society are envisaged, which follow the European Union's Shared Environmental Information System principles on data-sharing and fair data management principles. At the regional level, capacity-building on data and information production and sharing and the coordination of national monitoring programmes are included. A flagship initiative is also envisaged to establish a publicly-accessible Mediterranean integrated information system, through which synergy is established between national governments, international institutions and the private sector, to collect and transparently display information on the state of the environment and the status of delivery on the protocols to the Barcelona Convention. This will draw on data and support systems already in place, for example the UNEP/MAP Knowledge Management Platform as the hub of UNEP/MAP knowledge heritage, following commitments of the adopted UNEP/MAP data policy.

Strategic direction 6.6: Strengthen regional capabilities for information management and enhance the promotion of evidence-informed policymaking and foresight		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
6.6.1. Establish or strengthen support for data monitoring processes, including through survey information, as well as national centres providing integrated and publicly-accessible information.	National governments, regional institutions, civil society, private sector	2030
6.6.2. Foster joint knowledge-creation and knowledge-sharing initiatives between stakeholders that respect the European Union's Shared Environmental Information System principles on data sharing.	International institutions, national governments, and local authorities, academia, civil society	2035

[104] Comment by Mohammed VI Foundation

Regional		
6.6.3. Develop capacity on data and information production, sharing and management and enhance technology where necessary to create comparable and compatible data, and support informed policy making and policy foresight evidence based, also through a set of core indicators providing a summary of the major environmental and socio-economic challenges	Regional institutions, national governments, academia Plan Bleu/RAC INFO /RAC	2035
6.6.4. Coordinate national and regional monitoring programmes at the regional level, including through annual workshops.	Regional institutions, national governments, National and Regional Parliaments	2035

3. ENSURE THE IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2016-[2035] [2026-2035]

~~128.~~129. The implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016 [2035] [2026-2035] is a collective process. Although facilitated by the MAP system, it is the participation and active role of all stakeholders that will play a decisive role in its delivery.

~~129.~~130. The MAP system, which includes the UNEP/MAP Secretariat and the Regional Activity Centres, as well as the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, will provide leadership and guidance with respect to implementing the Strategy. Indeed the main UNEP/MAP policies and related measures formulated with a view to implementing the Protocols to the Barcelona Convention as well as other key existing regional mechanisms and instruments are essential for the implementation of the Strategy (Box 2). In addition, the MAP system will provide support and technical guidance to the Contracting Parties, as well as the coordination of implementation actions and monitoring processes, as well as a platform for the exchange of relevant information, experience and synergies developed at regional or sub-regional level.

~~130.~~131. The Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development is a key structure within the MAP system for supporting the development and implementation of the Strategy. As a central point of reference and bringing together representatives of the Parties and stakeholders involved with sustainable development, it will work closely, supported by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat, with the relevant organizations for the effective implementation of the Strategy. The Strategy represents a~~n~~ policy and actions--oriented framework ~~for~~for the Commission's work.~~, which will be complemented by MSSD implementation Work Plans.~~

~~i. The Mediterranean countries are invited to use the Strategy as a starting point for better integration of sustainable development into their national policies. The Strategy provides them with tools to integrate sustainable development into their national policies and build horizontal synergies between different government sectors and vertical synergies between different levels of government, from local to central and vice versa. That will allow for better coordination and integration of policies around the objective of sustainability.~~

~~131.~~132. Intergovernmental and regional and sub-regional institutions also have a very important role to play in the implementation of the Strategy. ~~As mentioned in chapter 1, there are already a number of regional and sub-regional institutions with strategies and actions aimed at supporting sustainable development in the Mediterranean region, as well as addressing significant environmental challenges.~~ Working in tandem with each other and with the MAP system, as well as facilitating synergies with Contracting Parties using the Strategy as a common platform, they can be critical for successful implementation. They will not only create an important critical mass of significant national and regional players working in a coordinated way towards sustainable development, but will also have a positive effect on using the limited human and financial resources needed for the implementation of joint activities more efficiently. ~~Among these, National and Regional Parliaments play a pivotal role in the Monitoring and Evaluation phase by fostering their oversight exercise, also through parliamentary assemblies and regional forum.~~ For these partners, the Strategy represents a coherent and integrated set of priority strategic directions and actions that need to be implemented to achieve sustainable development in the region, in which their actions and objectives are placed within an overall framework.

~~132.~~133. The private sector is a key partner for the implementation of the Strategy. As a key player in the emerging green economy, the private sector can be one of the strongest allies in the process of implementing the Strategy. This is not only through corporate social responsibility, but also through more sustainable consumption and production processes that are part of its core business, through the integration of innovative technologies, and through improved upstream and downstream processes of ~~1~~the industrial, artisanal and marketing chains. That will also contribute towards the sustainability of its own operations. For the private sector, the Strategy provides an indication of issues, directions and actions that have to be implemented to further sustainable development goals at regional, national an local level, and the type of discussions that have to be held within the context of sustainable development in the near future. This indication is of prime importance for business planning.

~~133.~~134. Science is key to success: all action and policy development at the national or regional level must rely on a strong evidence bases. The analytical tools that will allow the forecasting, planning and assessment of sustainable development-related impacts and actions need to be developed with the scientific community, which itself needs to direct its research capacity in support of decision making. For academia, the Strategy contains a series of sustainable development concerns that require assistance from science to

understand.

~~134.~~135. Civil society has always been an important group of stakeholders in the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development. In the implementation of the Strategy, its role becomes more pronounced: besides being a catalyst for supporting and monitoring the implementation process at the regional and national level, civil society can take up important tasks related to awareness and sensitization, as well as acting as the third pillar of democracy, along with decision-makers and judicial entities, to ensure transparency and secure the participation of the people. For civil society, the Strategy contains a set of strategic directions that at once inform its work along with other partners, and provides fertile grounds for the development of projects.

~~135.~~136. The importance of strengthening the role of local authorities, women and youth representatives in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda in the Mediterranean was highlighted at the 20th MCSD meeting in 2023. Delivering on SDG-14 and the 2030 Agenda as a whole will require youth and women empowerment, and inclusive policies that leave no one behind. Young people in the Mediterranean are solution-oriented, seeking green jobs and opportunities from a sustainable blue economy that delivers on its promises, including in the digital space. At the same time, the role of women in sustainable development is multidimensional and their voices need to be included at every forefront; they are often the first responders to their families, have unique ideas and perspectives, and often drive change at various levels. Local authorities are key actors of implementation for two main reasons: a) They are implementors by nature, since around 70% of SDG's rely on the effective work of local (including metropolitan) authorities; b) They are closer to citizens, both organised or individuals; the engagement of general public and citizens is very relevant to the implementation of the MSSD. Through its proximity, local authorities may be first hand enhancers of those behavioural changes.

~~136.~~137. National and Regional Parliaments play a pivotal role in supporting implementation, by fostering their oversight exercise, also through parliamentary assemblies and regional fora.[105]

~~137.~~138. Funding institutions~~bodies~~ are also key partners for the implementation of the Strategy. For these partners, the Strategy contains a set of widely-agreed regional objectives as well as strategic directions within these objectives, which will help such bodies to position and assess funding proposals aimed at advancing sustainable development in the region.

Box 2: Existing regional programmes and frameworks constituting essential tools for implementing the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-[2035] [2026-2035]

- Integrated coastal zone management is recognised as the way forward for the sustainable development of coastal zones and is characterised by a distinctive integrated approach to providing solutions to the complex environmental, social, economic and institutional problems of the coastal zones. As indicated by Article 2 of the **Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management for the Mediterranean** under the Barcelona Convention, "Integrated coastal zone management means a dynamic process for the sustainable management and use of coastal zones, taking into account at the same time the fragility of coastal ecosystems and landscapes, the diversity of activities and uses, their interactions, the maritime orientation of certain activities and uses and their impact on both the marine and land parts". The adoption of this protocol is a fully achieved policy-objective of the initial Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (2005). Its implementation is supported by the Action Plan 2012-2019.

- The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention committed to apply the ecosystem-based approach – through the **Ecosystem Approach Roadmap** – to the management of human activities while enabling a sustainable use of marine goods and services, with the view to achieving or maintaining good environmental status of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal regions, their protection and preservation, as well as preventing their subsequent deterioration. They recognize the ecosystem approach as an integrated operational approach for the successful implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its protocols while enhancing sustainable development in the region, as well as a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.

- The **Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean** (entered into force in 1999) is implemented through the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO) adopted in 2021. In addition, the extension of the network of Specially

[105] Comment by PAM

Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance and the adoption and implementation of a Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area based conservation measures in the Mediterranean represent important achievements for the region.

- **The Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan for the Mediterranean**, which is under preparation, aims at achieving the shift to sustainable patterns of consumption and production in priority economic sectors while addressing related environmental degradation challenges. It supports the implementation of sustainable consumption and production actions at the regional level and identifies actions to guide the implementation of the sustainable consumption and production at the national level, addressing key human activities which have a particular impact on the marine and coastal environment and related transversal and cross-cutting issues

~~• The preparation and adoption by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention of a **Strategic Action Programme of regional and national activities to address land-based pollution** is one of the major breakthroughs in the Mediterranean countries' efforts to combat land-based pollution. This action-oriented initiative is implemented under the MED POL Programme - identifying priority target categories of polluting substances and activities to be eliminated or controlled by the Mediterranean countries through a planned timetable for the implementation of specific pollution reduction measures and interventions.~~

- The adoption by the Contracting Parties of Regional Plans on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, on Urban Wastewater Treatment, on Sewage Sludge Management, on Agriculture Management, on Aquaculture Management and on Urban Stormwater Management, are major breakthroughs to combat marine pollution from Land Based Sources and Activities ~~Entered into force in 2014, the **Marine Litter Regional Plan** is the first regional plan on marine litter under a regional sea convention. It presents measures and operational targets to achieve good environmental status and respective targets on marine litter; develop and implement appropriate policy, legal instruments and institutional arrangements, including solid waste and sewer system management plans which shall incorporate marine litter prevention and reduction measures; raise awareness by the development of education programmes by the Contracting Parties; ensure institutional coordination and close coordination and collaboration between regional, national and local authorities in the field of marine litter; mobilize the producers, manufacturer brand Responsible Actors and first importers to be more responsible for the entire life cycle of the product and also sustainable procurement policies contributing to the promotion of the consumption of recycled plastic made products; and, identify hotspots and implement national programmes to remove disposal in a sound manner regularly~~.

- The **Offshore Action Plan** includes priority actions and measures for the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to ratify the Offshore Protocol; designate Contracting Parties' representatives to participate to the regional governing bodies; establish a technical cooperation and capacity building programme; establish a financial mechanism for the implementation of the Action Plan; promote access to information and public participation in decision-making; enhance the regional transfer of technology; develop and adopt regional offshore standards; develop and adopt regional offshore guidelines; establish regional offshore monitoring procedures and programmes; and, report on the implementation of the Action Plan.

- **The Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas,** which is under preparation, aims to increase the resilience of the Mediterranean marine and coastal areas to climate change through the development of a regional approach to climate change adaptation. Once adopted, this framework will form the basis for the development of a detailed Regional Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan.

- **The ~~action programmes of the~~Ministerial Declarations and other frameworks established under the Union for the Mediterranean, including the** 2030 GreenerMed Agenda.~~:~~ ~~On launching the Union, the heads of State and Government of Mediterranean countries agreed six priority areas of action, including depollution of the Mediterranean and alternative energies. At its 2021 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate change Action (Athens, 2014), the Union for the Mediterranean affirmed its commitment to accelerate the transition towards sustainable, climate neutral, green, fair, circular and resilient economies; the shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns and the transition to a green and low-emission economy, among others~~.
- *With a 2030 target, **the EU Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters"** aims to protect and restore the health of our ocean and waters through research and innovation, citizen engagement and blue investments. The Mission's new approach will address the ocean and waters as one and play a key role*

in achieving climate neutrality and restoring nature. Cross-cutting enabling actions will support this objective, in particular broad public mobilisation and engagement and a digital ocean and water knowledge system, known as Digital Twin Ocean. The Mission supports regional engagement and cooperation through area-based "lighthouses" in major sea/river basins: Atlantic-Arctic, Mediterranean Sea, Baltic-North Sea, and Danube-Black Sea. Mission lighthouses are sites to pilot, demonstrate, develop and deploy the Mission activities across EU seas and river basins.

- ~~The Horizon 2020 Europe and its Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters" aims to protect and restore the health of ocean and waters through research and innovation, citizen engagement and blue investments.~~

- **The Environmental Reports on Resolutions unanimously adopted by all the 31 Member Parliaments of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) at the 17th, 18th and 19th PAM Plenary Sessions**, recalling the crucial role of National and Regional Parliaments in implementing the provisions of the Barcelona Conventions and its Protocols, to facilitate the advancement of SDGs in the region.The 2024 "Parliamentarian's guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast" (UNEP, 2024) is a concrete tool for parliamentarians engage for stronger enforcement of, and compliance with, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

- Endorsed at the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Change of the Union for the Mediterranean, the **Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development** encourages the Mediterranean countries to develop and incorporate education on sustainable development into their formal education systems, in all relevant subjects, and in non-formal and informal education. This will equip people with knowledge of and skills in sustainable development, making them more competent and confident and increasing their opportunities for acting for a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature and with concern for social values, gender equity and cultural diversity.

WestMed Initiative was adopted by the European Commission on 19 April 2017 and endorsed by the Council of the EU on 26 June 2017.In 2018 a common roadmap was agreed for the development of a sustainable blue economy in the sub-basin to generate growth, create jobs and provide a better living environment for Mediterranean populations, while preserving the services performed by the Mediterranean ecosystem. The roadmap includes 6 priorities: Maritime safety and the fight against marine pollution; Maritime cluster development; Skills development and circulation; Sustainable consumption and production; Biodiversity and marine habitat conservation and restoration; Development of coastal communities and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.

- The Macro-regional Strategy for the Mediterranean has appeared in recent years as an important tool to accelerate changes and address challenges and menaces regarding climate change, biodiversity loss, protection and restoration and sustainable development promotion. The European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions of the European Union and the European Economic and Social Council have approved or expressed resolutions and opinions to support such strategy. This Mediterranean Strategy salutes these steps and will consider the developing of this initiative as a potential enhancer of the implementation of this MSSD

- The European Union (DG-MENA) funded "Water and Environment Support-Biodiversity and Climate Action (WES-BCA) in the Neighbourhood South region" aims to improve the protection of the environment, the restoration of biodiversity and the management of scarce water resources, while enhancing the resilience to climate change in the Mediterranean region, strengthening the formulation, ~~,~~ enforcement and implementation of the relevant policies of the Contracting Parties which are not member of the ~~n~~-EU ~~Mediterranean Countries~~ and the two regional ~~political~~ frameworks, namely the MAP/Barcelona Convention and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). ~~It works primarily with the rêvent Ministries through appointed Focal Points but it also involves a large number of non-State stakeholders . The WES-BCA builds on the experience and achievements of its predecessor projects (WES, SWIM-H2020 SM, SWIM SM, Horizon 2020 CB/MEP) and provides continuity in regional and national initiatives including on capacity building,technical assistance. ESD, awareness raising and access to environmental~~

~~information and public participation as well as on activities and good practices addressing key issues such as marine litter/ plastics, waste water treatment and reuse, WEFE Nexus &Source-to-Sea approaches etc~~

- Under the New Pact for the Mediterranean, the EU is expected to renew~~s~~ commitment to strengthen engagement with the region, addressing shared challenges and opportunities for sustainable development, inclusive growth, and regional stability. Building on the foundations of the 2021 Agenda for the Mediterranea, the Pact is expected to promote~~s~~ concrete initiatives for deeper, impact-driven cooperation.

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) is a macro-regional strategy adopted by the European Commission and endorsed by the European Council in 2014. The general objective of the EUSAIR is to promote economic and social prosperity and growth in the region by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity. With four EU members and four non EU countries the strategy will contribute to the further integration of the Western Balkans.The countries are aiming to create synergies and foster coordination among all territories in the Adriatic-Ionian Region in the four thematic areas/ pillars: sustainable tourism, environmental quality, connecting the region and blue growth.

- **The Interreg Euro-MED Programme 2021-2027** supports cooperation across Mediterranean borders. The programme provides funds for projects developed and managed by public administrations, universities, private and civil society organizations to jointly implement transnational projects.
  The Programme brings together partners from 69 regions of 14 countries from the Northern shore of the Mediterranean with a common objective: a climate neutral and resilient society for the benefit of its citizens. The total programme budget amounts to about 294M€ for the 2021-2027 period.
  The Interreg Euro-MED Programme funds projects willing to bring solutions to answer 4 complementary missions: Strengthening an innovative sustainable economy, Protecting, restoring and valorising the natural environment and heritage, Promoting green living areas, Enhancing sustainable tourism.

- **The Interreg Next Med Programme 2021-2027** aims to contribute to smart, sustainable, fair development for all across the Mediterranean basin by supporting balanced, long-lasting, far-reaching cooperation and multilevel governance. The programme mission is to finance transnational cooperation projects that address joint socio-economic, environmental and governance challenges at Mediterranean level such as the uptake of advanced technologies, competitiveness of SMEs and job creation, energy efficiency, sustainable water management, climate change adaptation, transition to a circular and resource efficient economy, education and training, health care, etc. The cooperation area covers 15 countries: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Jordan, Malta, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia – and two new members, namely Algeria and Türkiye.

- With a 2030 target, **the EU Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters"** aims to protect and restore the health of our ocean and waters through research and innovation, citizen engagement and blue investments. The Mission's new approach will address the ocean and waters as one and play a key role in achieving climate neutrality and restoring nature.
  Cross-cutting enabling actions will support this objective, in particular broad public mobilisation and engagement and a digital ocean and water knowledge system, known as Digital Twin Ocean.
  The Mission supports regional engagement and cooperation through area-based "lighthouses" in major sea/river basins: Atlantic-Arctic, Mediterranean Sea, Baltic-North Sea, and Danube-Black Sea. Mission lighthouses are sites to pilot, demonstrate, develop and deploy the Mission activities across EU seas and river basins.

~~- This final chapter addresses the implementation of the Strategy, focusing on three critical areas:~~
~~-~~
~~- institutional structures and processes for the implementation of the Strategy;~~
~~- financing the implementation of the Strategy; and,~~
~~- monitoring system and regional dashboard on the implementation of the Strategy~~

3.1. Institutional structures and means for the implementation of the Strategy

~~138.~~139. Further reinforcing adequate institutional structures is a key priority in providing for effective implementation of the Strategy. The existing management system for the Strategy implementation faces a number of challenges.

ii. One of the major challenges for implementing sustainability strategies in any context is that of complexity. In the Mediterranean there is complexity both in terms of management scales (international, national and local), and in terms of the various competencies of the related international organizations, coupled with a number of regional initiatives and programmes. In addition, in the national context, complexity also arises from the need to coordinate the remits and competencies of the various ministries and regulators at various scales. While there are many established cooperation forums at the international level, cooperation between the various stakeholders, at multiple scales, is not always integrated in the processes and activities relevant for the implementation of the Strategy. Such a complex management system runs the risk of excessive simplification of activities and lack of harmonization of practical actions to apply sustainability principles. Efficient coordination and capacity building of relevant stakeholders is therefore an urgent requirement for the Strategy implementation. As noted under the Governance objective, timely consultations on proposed contents, which, implemented early enough, would help avoiding misunderstandings, divergent objectives and overlapping of competencies. Consultations that begin at the early stages of policy development are more likely to motivate stakeholders to provide good quality professional contributions. A commitment towards transparency also helps to build trust, which increases the chances of policy, programme and project implementation. This is an area where capacity building is required.

iii. A second key challenge relates to defining clear policy objectives and the expected results of plans, programmes and projects, and to a lack of tradition to act in accordance with determined objectives. Objectives often lack clear indicators for performance assessment or responsibility for the achievement of results. Capacity-building is also required here, while the MSSD implementation Work Plans will concretely support this process.

iv. A third key challenge for implementation relates to the difficulty of successfully integrating economic, social, cultural and environmental objectives when faced with the over-riding expectation that governments achieve immediate economic goals. Related to this is the fact that the environment and social implications of development are often not clearly understood, in particular at national and local scales.

v. Third, organization building and restructuring for the implementation of sustainable development is often hampered by inadequate institutional system capacity to efficiently carry out duties within the scope of its competencies. Lack of capacities, of human resources and financing sources, at various scales, was identified as a shortcoming by numerous stakeholders in the process of consultations during the review of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

~~139.~~140. ~~In the context of the above challenges facing the management system for sustainable development in the Mediterranean region, the following strategic directions and actions are required.~~ In order to improve sustainable development governance it is essential that the right structures are put in place or strengthened, and properly resourced (strategic direction 7.1). At a national level, it is essential to ensure the wide participation of relevant organizations in sustainable development management through the setting up of sustainable development commissions, councils, fora, and networks as appropriate in each national context. These coordination and consultation bodies should serve to achieve wide and high-level political support at national level, particularly with key ministries whose competencies affect or are effected by, sustainable development, including the prime minister, where relevant, and must be supported by adequate human and financial resources.

~~140.~~141. At a regional level, it is essential that the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development should have its proper funding and its human resources and that MAP's own governance and funding programmes are designed to take into account the need for resources for sustainable development. A second regional action reflects to the need to enlarge the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development to ensure the participation of a larger number of relevant international organizations and stakeholder groups from the Mediterranean region involved in sustainable development processes.

~~141.~~142. Improving visibility and outreach of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, particularly within the United Nations system, such as within the Conferences of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention and at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development is essential. This would entail the establishment of a ministerial level of action through organization of regular four-yearly sessions dedicated to sustainable development of the Mediterranean at the ministerial

level within the framework of the Conferences of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention. The final action under this strategic direction focuses on ensuring that the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development fulfils its role in promoting the exchange of good practices and networking in areas relevant to its remit.

Strategic direction 7.1: Put in place or strengthen structures for sustainable development implementation at national and regional scale, and ensure their adequate resourcing		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
National		
7.1.1. Ensure a wide participation of relevant organizations in sustainable development management at the national level through the setting up of sustainable development commissions, councils, fora, and networks as appropriate.	National governments, local authorities as authorities to be taken into account to ensure the participation of relevant organizations in sustainable development at National level[106]	2035
Regional		
7.1.2 Improve the impact of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development in the regional context through strengthening of the administrative and financial support for its operation, in particular by strengthening the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit as the Commission Secretariat for it to be able to coordinating the implementation and monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035 and the regular reporting on progress.	UNEP/MAP	2035
7.1.3 [Enlarge the] [~~New~~] MCSD participants as observers to ensure the participation of a larger number of relevant international organizations and stakeholder groups including women and youth from the Mediterranean region involved in sustainable development processes, and 7.1.3.bis ~~to e~~Enhance coordination at the regional level between related frameworks in order to ~~and to establish~~ acknowledge the MSSD as the overarching Strategic Reference document for the region.[107]	Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, UNEP/MAP UFM, WestMed Initiative, EUSAIR macro regional strateg, -Interreg Euro-Med, Interreg Next South, Interreg Adrion, Ocean Mission, Mediterranean Committee on ESD Action Plan[108]	[Ongoing ~~2035~~]
7.1.4. Improve visibility and outreach of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development and the MSSD[109], with the support of a communication strategy, particularly within the United Nations system, such as within the Conferences of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention and at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development, to complement the four-yearly ministerial sessions on sustainable development at the Conference of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention.	Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, UNEP/MAP	2035
7.1.5. Ensure that the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development fulfils its role in promoting the exchange of good practices and networking in areas relevant to its remit on sustainable development, as well as through appointing 'champions' where relevant.	Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, UNEP/MAP	2035

~~142.~~143. The second strategic direction in this section focuses on establishing mechanisms for management of sustainable development processes, in particular the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable

[106] Comment by MedCities
[107] Comment by Greece
[108] Comment by Cyprus
[109] Comment by EcoUnion

Development 2016 [2035] [2026-2035] at the regional level (strategic direction 7.2). The actions recommended take on board the understanding that policies and strategies exist within a policy cycle, beginning with policy formulation and continuing with policy implementation and monitoring and then policy review.

~~vi. The first action under this strategic direction focuses on the need to integrate the role of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development Secretariat and the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy into the regular MAP programmes of work. A second action concerns the drafting of an implementation plan for the Strategy, which identifies the optimal mechanisms for the participation of national institutional frameworks responsible for sustainable development in the implementation of the Strategy national actions. This implementation plan should include the possibility of achieving voluntary agreements with key stakeholders in the region, thus contributing to the coherence of the common work in the Mediterranean basin towards sustainable development. It should also take into consideration the need to regularly communicate the work on implementation of the Strategy in order to retain momentum.~~

~~vii. The fourth action under this strategic direction focuses on the need for a participatory mid- term evaluation based on the first 5 years of data regarding the implementation of the Strategy, based on indicators associated with the actions, as well as the[proposed] dashboard of Sustainability Indicators [subject to regular update]. [This dashboard will draw on the indicators already selected in connection with the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean, as well as the Regional framework for ICZM and the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap]. The Strategy will be reviewed after ten years, taking into consideration global developments, and a new Strategy will then need to be defined by 2035.~~

Strategic direction 7.2: Establish regional processes for the implementation and monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
Regional		
7.2.1 Ensure that the regular programmes of work of UNEP/MAP allocate the necessary resources for leading the implementation and monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016- [2035] [2026-2035]	Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, UNEP/MAP, Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention	2035
7.2.2 Strengthen the support of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development to national/local authorities	UNEP/MAP	2035
7.2.3Undertake a participatory mid- term and final evaluations of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable 2016- [2035] [2026-2035] based on the first 5 years of data regarding its implementation, using indicators associated with the actions, as well as the proposed dashboard of Sustainability Indicators.	UNEP/MAP	2035
7.2.4 Review the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-[2035] [2026-2035 issuing a new Strategy for the period 2036-2045, based on the MSSD final evaluation.	UNEP/MAP	2035

3.2. Financing the implementation of the Strategy

~~143.~~144. Implementation of the Strategy, based on the ambitious but necessary and realistic vision of establishing a sustainable Mediterranean on strong economic and social foundations, needs significant financial resources. The resources for financing the Strategy implementation cannot and should not be expected to come from only one or a few sources. It is, again, a collective effort, through which the sum will be much greater than the addition of the parts, thanks to the synergies developed and economies of scale achieved.

~~144.~~145. In that sense, the national budgets of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, allocating funds for the implementation of strategic targets aligned with the Strategy and the mobilization of resources for participation in regional and sub-regional actions aligned with the Strategy can significantly assist in promoting implementation, while at the same time serving national objectives and policies. ~~The proposed activities within the Strategy are designed in such a way as to allow the Parties to adhere to existing activities, or to develop actions that fit within one or more strategic directions and relevant actions, thus directing national funding for sustainable development in the direction proposed in the Strategy.~~

~~145.~~146. ~~Similarly, the coordination between MAP and other regional and sub-regional intergovernmental organizations and development agencies can be streamlined around selected topics and actions of the Strategy, so that collective support can produce the necessary resources for significant actions in the region. The development of flagship initiatives is aimed at concentrating the efforts of all involved partners and stakeholders on actions that will gain significant impetus, through publicity and promotion, and increased effectiveness through the synergies developed and the focusing of resources on common targets.~~

~~146.~~147. The private sector needs to be in a central place in the process. By mobilizing resources for its own research, development and integration of technologies into the production process, and shifting some of the resources invested annually in marketing and promotion activities, it can play a very significant role in critically strengthening the process of implementation. For that purpose, the MAP system, as well as the Contracting Parties ~~to the Barcelona Convention~~ and other stakeholders, such as civil society, need to develop close working relations with the private sector and construct a platform of trust and synergy through which 'win-win' collaborations will be established for the implementation of actions in the context of the Strategy.

~~147.~~148. Strategic direction 7.3 addresses the need to strengthen capacity for financing the Strategy. The first action in this regard relates to the development of a project portfolio drawn from the Strategy to support

fundraising activities. The second action relates to the provision of capacity-building workshops on fundraising. In addition, the Strategy recommends the creation of an investment facility for sustainable development implementation in the Mediterranean, involving international financial institutions, development banks, the European Union and bilateral donor agencies. Finally, the Strategy encourages private sector to engage with civil society and foster greater corporate social responsibility.

Strategic direction 7.3: Strengthen capacity for financing the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-[2035] [2026-2035]		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time frame**
Regional		
7.3.1. Build a project portfolio aimed at supporting the implementation of Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development actions, and associate possible funding sources with the portfolio.	UNEP/MAP	2030
7.3.2. Provide capacity-building workshops to national governments and stakeholders, as well as sub-regional bodies in fundraising to improve their access to funding.	UNEP/MAP, UFM, National and Regional Parliaments, other regional and/ international organizations,/initiatives /programmes, WES/BCA, INTERREG Med/ PRIMA Programmes	2035
7.3.3. Mapping funding opportunities and develop a MSSD funding strategy and create an investment facility for sustainable development implementation in the Mediterranean, involving international financial institutions, development banks, the European Union and bilateral donor agencies, as well as engaging with the private sector	UNEP/MAP, regional and international organizations, national governments, European Union, WB, EBRD, EIB	2035

3.3. Monitoring system and a regional dashboard on the implementation of the Strategy

148.149. A comprehensive monitoring system and relevant indicators are necessary to assess for the implementation of the Strategy. This is done using the MSSD dashboard indicators.

150. The indicators core set to monitor the progress of sustainable development issues are available online (https://wesr.unep.org/article/dashboard), in an interactive way. The MSSD Dashboard indicators should be subject to regular update.

151. The implementation of the Strategy is subject to an independent Mid-Term evaluation in 2030 that should take into account the forthcoming global sustainability framework and recommend the necessary directions as appropriate.

152. The Strategy is subject to a final evaluation in 2035. Both evaluations should be independent, participatory and inclusive involving the MCSD members, partners and stakeholders and be accompanied by an updated evaluation of the MSSD Dashboard indicators to assess sustainability trends.

149.153.

viii. [Data and information sharing is facilitated by the Aarhus Convention. The UNEP Live knowledge platform aims to fill the gaps between data providers and consumers.[43] The crowd-sourcing of data could complement the institutional data sources generally used in international reporting. The population of the indicators in the Strategy should also mobilize a data revolution for sustainable development[44] taking into consideration more open data.] [to be considered for deletion]

ix. Based on the existing reporting systems and through countries involvement, strong partnerships with regional and national experts and stakeholders, Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols are encouraged to proceed with periodic evaluation of the MSSD and its dashboard to timely consider the regular update of national and regional datasets, while it will allow precise and up to date analysis of the progress towards the sustainable development of the region based on the sustainability dashboard, utilizing on primary basis the data from already existing reliable sources. ~~sources should also be the practice to the extent possible. Strategic direction 7.4 contains four actions to ensure the regular monitoring of the Strategy, the first being for national governments and regional organizations to support the monitoring process through regular and timely provision of regular data. Although much data is found through international databases, there is also the need for national governments and other stakeholders to provide some information directly. A second action concerns the need to ensure that the Strategy monitoring systems are built taking into account the existing and planned data-sharing and information systems of the MAP and highlights the potential of meetings of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development to assist with monitoring the implementation of the Strategy through discussions in breakout groups.~~

Strategic direction 7.4: Ensure the regular monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025		
Actions	**Responsible Actors**	**Time Frame**
National		
7.4.1. Provide data on biannual basis for monitoring the Strategy, reporting on the progress of the MSSD biannually	National governments, regional organizations, UNEP/MAP	2035
Regional		
7.4.2. Ensure that the Strategy monitoring systems are built taking into account the existing and planned data-sharing and information systems of the MAP, complementing with the potential of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development meetings for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy using breakout groups.	UNEP/MAP, national governments, regional organizations, Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, UNEP/MAP	2035
7.4.3 Update and populate the dashboard of sustainability indicators for the Mediterranean, with the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development playing an advisory role in the selection process.	UNEP/MAP, Plan Bleu, Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development	2035

MSSD OBJ	Strategic Directions	Flagship Initiative	PLeading partner
OBJ 1 Climate Change	SD 1.1: Increase scientific knowledge, education, raise awareness	**ONGOING:** Regional science-policy interface mechanism to prepare consolidated regional scientific assessments on climate change trends, impacts and adaptation and mitigation options (**MedEcc**)	MedEcc Supported by UNEP/MAP, Plan Bleu/RAC, UfM
		NEW: Launching of educational initiatives (e.x. Mediterranean ESD Network: Platform for collaboration among schools, universities, and civil societies Mediterranean Green Skills Program: Training for youth and women in sustainable business practices	CYPRUS, Mediterranean Committee on Education and Sustainable Development, WES/BCA
	SD 1.5: economy decarbonization energy transition and renewable energies	NEW: Delivering 1TW of renewable energy capacity in the Mediterranean by 2030 (**TERAMED**)	Presented by ECOUNION and RAED. Regional governments, international organizations, private sector stakeholders, and civil society groups

MSSD OBJ	Strategic Directions	Flagship Initiative	PLeading partner
OBJ 2 Health, productivity, restoration and resilience	SD 2.1: implementation, compliance and monitoring with regional requirements of regulatory and policy frameworks of BC for coastal and marine management	Achieving **30 by 30** MPAs/ OECMs Targets **(Update of MEDFUND Flagship Initiative)**	SPA/RAC Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation; Oceanographic Institute – Prince Albert 1st of Monaco Foundation ; UNEP/MAP Specially Protected Area Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC); Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund; MedPAN; WWF Mediterranean; IUCN Centre for Mediterranean cooperation; French coastal protection agency Conservatoire du Littoral; Mediterranean Small Islands Initiative, MedPAN is the network of Mediterranean marine protected area managers.

MSSD OBJ	Strategic Directions	Flagship Initiative	PLeading partner
		NEW: **Mediterranean Coast Day**	PAP/RAC Partnership , Secretariat of UNEP/MAP and Regional Activity Centres under the Barcelona Convention System Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention UNEP Regional Seas Programme & Regional Seas UNESCO UNEP/MAP— Barcelona Convention system Partners (IGOs and NGOs) Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ocean & Climate Platform International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) WWF-Mediterranean Mediterranean Information Office for the Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MiO-ESCEDE) MedWet Initiative MED SEA Foundation ARTPORT_making waves

MSSD OBJ	Strategic Directions	Flagship Initiative	PLeading partner
	SD 2.3: Promote well connected ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures nature-based solutions at national, transboundary and Mediterranean level and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss	**ONGOING:** Promote the **IUCN Green list** standard in riparian states to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of parks managing bodies created.	IUCN-Green List The following countries support the initiative: Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Spain.
		NEW: Promote the protection and conservation of **Seagrass/Posidonia Meadows** as crucial ecosystem	SPA/RAC Partners: The French Biodiversity Agency (OFB), IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, WWF Mediterranean, The Mediterranean Posidonia Network Countries: France, Tunisia, Spain, Malta, Cyprus, Algeria, Türkiye, Italy, Greece
OBJ 3 Sustainable resource management, food security, rural development, food systems	SD 3.1: circular/regenerative use, management and conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Natural Resources	NEW: Strategy for the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus (WEFE Nexus) in the Mediterranean Source to Sea continuum (**WEFE NEXUS**)	~~MEDProgramme;~~ UfM; DG NEAR; UNEP/MAP; Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) Water and Environment Support mechanism (WES/BCA) Project PRIMA Partnership for Research & Innovation in the Mediterranean area

MSSD OBJ	Strategic Directions	Flagship Initiative	PLeading partner
		NEW: **Mediterranean Forest Initiative**	UNEP, FAO and UNDRR UfM, EFIMed, Partner countries of the Mediterranean, Barcelona Convention, UNEP/MAP RACs, Mio-ECSDE, IUCN, CEDARE, Observatory of the Sahara and the Sahel (OSS)
OBJ 4 Sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities	SD 4.1: Apply holistic and integrated spatial planning processes and other related instruments, as well as improved compliance with respective rules and regulations, to increase economic, social and territorial cohesion and reduce pressures on the environment	**ONGOING:** Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award	UNEP/MAP MedCities
		NEW: Mediterranean **Network of Zero Net Cities**	UNEP/MAP MedCities Countries/states: Contracting parties of the Barcelona Convention, starting for example from those that their cities won the previous 4 IEFCA, Greece, Cyprus and Albania Winner cities of previous 4 IEFCA: Izmir, Genoa, Malaga, Ashdod Interested Mediterranean Cities from the 112 NetZeroCities, starting by MedCities members, such as Barcelona, València, Marseille, Rome, Limassol and Izmir Other interested cities: Athens, Tirana, as e.g. Signatories of the Covenant of Mayors PAP/RAC Plan Bleu/RAC and SCP/RAC

MSSD OBJ	Strategic Directions	Flagship Initiative	PLeading partner
	SD 4.2: Encourage inclusive urbanization and strengthen capacities for participatory and integrated human settlement planning and management	**ONGOING**: -Sustainable **urban toolbox** for the Mediterranean (Medurbantools) ~~(Capitalises the former flagship initiative 'Undertake regional assessments, knowledge exchanges, of high- and low-tech solutions, to achieve waste reduction'~~	MedCities, Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB), ~~Interreg MED Urban Transports Community and REV-ACTE projects~~
OBJ 5 Sustainable, green, blue and circular economy, sustainable finance	SD 5.3: Encourage innovation and sustainable business solutions to advance towards the objectives of a just low-carbon, circular, green and blue economy	**ONGOING:** WeMedBusiness Award	SCP/RAC, UNEP/MAP
		NEW: **Sustainable blue tourism**	ECO-UNION and -IDDRI CSOs: Plan Bleu/RAC, IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation. Supportive Countries: France, Spain Implementing countries: Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Montenegro.
		~~**Integrate sustainability principles into public procurement at national and local levels**~~	

MSSD OBJ	Strategic Directions	Flagship Initiative	PLeading partner
OBJ 6 Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development	SD 6.3: Promote the engagement of civil society, scientists, youth and women, financial institutions, private sector, local communities and other stakeholders in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive whole of society processes and integrity in decision-making	**ONGOING:** Encourage the adoption and implementation of the **Aarhus Convention**	MIO-ECSDE COMPSUD MEPIELAN UNECE Aarhus Convention secretariat, UNEP/MAP, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM (Committee on Energy, Environment and Water),
		NEW: **Women leadership** for SDGs in the Mediterranean	UNEP/MAP, -women representatives of MCSD members PAM Women Parliamentary Forum Countries: France, Slovenia (Current Bureau Chair), Egypt (Next Bureau Chair), Algeria (hosting of 2024 Mediterranean Coast Day), etc UFM Plan Bleu/-RAC, PAP/RAC and INFO/RAC Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED) ASCAME EPLO CPMR-InterMediterranean Commission OECD – Istanbul Centre

MSSD OBJ	Strategic Directions	Flagship Initiative	PLeading partner
		NEW: **Youth involvement** in MSSD decision process and implementation	Mediterranean Youth Group IECD –J-Med NGOs involved in the implementation of SDGs, Med sustainable development in the Med Sea (Mediterranean SOS Network (MedSOS) – Greece; Amici della Terra Italia (Friends of the Earth Italy) – Italy; L'Association de Sauvegarde de la Nature et de l'Environnement (ASNE) – Tunisia; RAED (Arab Network for Environment and Development) – Egypt; DOTO (Diaries of the ocean) - Lebanon Med Countries INFO/RAC Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) MIO-ECSDE Anna Lindh Foundation Académie des Talents Méditerranéens
		NEW: **MED Green Week**	~~UNEP/MAP~~ UFM, UNEP/MAP

MSSD OBJ	Strategic Directions	Flagship Initiative	PLeading partner
	SD 6.4: Promote the implementation, and monitoring of the SD Strategies at all levels of government, considering synergies and tradeoffs between different policies and sectors, including intersectional management (WEFE NEXUS) through policy coherence for sustainable development based on whole of government approach, inter-ministerial coordination and multi-level government	~~**Develop capacity building programmes on issues related to implementation and compliance with environmental obligation**~~	
	6.5: Promote education and research for sustainable development	**ONGOING:** Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development	MIO-ECSDE The following countries participate in the Bureau of the initiative: Cyprus (chair), Greece, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine. and the~~The following~~ international/regional organizations participate, as well as ~~in~~ the Bureau of the ~~initiative:~~ ~~UNEP/MAP, UfM , UNESCO , UNECE, League of Arab States~~ Mediterranean Committee of ESD

MSSD OBJ	Strategic Directions	Flagship Initiative	PLeading partner
	6.6: Strengthen regional capabilities for information management and enhance the promotion of evidence-informed policymaking and foresight	**ONGOING:** Observatory on Environment and Sustainable Development	Plan Bleu, Tunisia, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Turkiye

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[13] Plan Bleu report: Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development Follow-up - Main Indicators Update 2013.

[14] Horizon 2020 Mediterranean report: Toward shared environmental information systems. EEA- UNEP/MAP joint report (2014)

[15] Plan Bleu report: Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development Follow-up - Main Indicators Update 2013.

[16] Najib Saab: Keynote speech at the Conference on the MSSD Review, Floriana, Malta, 2015 (Non edited meeting report)

[17] In 2013, Plan Bleu reported that between 2000 and 2009 only six Mediterranean countries decreased their Ecological Footprint. Plan Bleu report: Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development Follow-up - Main Indicators Update 2013.

[18] See http://www.unepmap.org/index.php?module=content2&catid=001001001

[19] Decision IG.21/9 of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, Annex I.

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[21] See http://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/; http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/adriatic-ionian/

[22] See http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/maritime_spatial_planning/index_en.htm.

[23] http://www.oceanhealthindex.org/

[24] Giullo Malorgio, New Medit N. 2/2004,
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[27] See https://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/gpap_home/gpap_quality/gpap_greenlist/

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[39] UNEP(DEP)/MED WG. 358/Inf 3, pp. 61-62.

[40] See http://ia2dec.ew.eea.europa.eu/knowledge_base/Frameworks/doc101182 for a description of the framework.

[41] See http://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/publications/soed2009_en.pdf

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[43] See http://uneplive.unep.org/

[44] Report prepared at the request of the Secretary-General by the Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development (November 2014), available from http://www.undatarevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/A-World-That-Counts2.pdf.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2035- 2026-2035 provides a strategic policy framework, built upon a broad consultation process, for securing a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region consistent with Sustainable Development Goals and efficiently deliver them at regional and national level. It aims to harmonise the interactions between socio-economic and environmental goals, adapt international commitments to regional conditions, guide national strategies for sustainable development, and stimulate regional cooperation between stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable development. As highlighted in its subtitle (***Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development***), the Strategy is underpinned by the conviction that investment in the environment, green transition, climate resilience, circular economy supported by the development of green taxonomy and whole of society involvement is the best way to protect Mediterranean sea and coasts and achieve Good Environmental Status and secure long-term sustainable job creation and socio-economic development, leaving nobody behind while improving public health, and an enhanced quality of life.

2. The Strategy focuses on addressing cross-cutting issues that lie in the interface between environment and development. It addresses issues across sectoral, institutional and legal boundaries, emphasizing the interlinkages between environmental issues, climate change challenges, sea and coasts' management and multiple use governance, sustainable circular economy, reviewable energies, Water-Energy-Food -Ecosystem Nexus, Nature-based solutions, rural development and food security and management, sustainable cities and social challenges~~, rather than specific economic sectors.~~ The Strategy is also expected to boost synergies between the work of key national and regional stakeholders, by providing a commonly-agreed framework, thereby leading to increased efficiency in the implementation of sustainable development in the Mediterranean, as well as by further supporting the engagement of civil society, scientists, youth and women, financial institutions, private sector, local communities, thus ensuring an inclusive framework.

3. In particular the urgent need to address climate change as a top priority for the Mediterranean basin is a red flag alert to be urgently addressed, while all key recent reports[110] confirm worrisome scenario in the short and long perspectives.
The frequent and dramatic impacts on the environment, on key economic sectors of the region and last but not least on our lives, do not admit any further delayed action.
Adaptation to climate change is for UNEP/MAP and its Contracting Parties the common matter to be jointly addressed. Doing so it will also contribute to further strengthening regional cooperation, also weaving more specific and decentralized cooperation with sub-national authorities, municipalities, territories, to ensure targeted adaptation actions.

4. The Mediterranean Sea is home to a large diversity of ecosystems and species subject to considerable pressures and it is home to a large share of the world's marine biodiversity, but it is also the victim of decades of unsustainable use, despite the efforts for an effective management. it also suffers most from the impacts of climate change, warming 20% faster than the rest of the world according to the MedECC[111], thus, it holds the highest percentage of threatened marine habitats, including 21% vulnerable and 11% endangered on the EU28 Red List.[112] Its coasts account for ~~30~~ 31 per cent of global tourist arrivals. Development of large and mega-cities is increasing pressures from the rising population levels and the accumulation of economic activities in coastal zones. Mediterranean agricultural products and diet have a global reputation, but depend on the sustainability of rural landscapes, resources and decent working conditions. Global shipping routes through the Mediterranean constitutes an important transit and trans-shipment area for international shipping, hosting 17% of the world's oil tanker capacity and making the density of maritime traffic exceptional for a semi-closed sea. The recent surge of interest in the exploitation of hydrocarbons and minerals under the Mediterranean seabed poses also increased risks for the environment.

5. Significant discrepancies in development levels between countries, together with conflicts in the region, pose challenges for envisaging a sustainable future of the Mediterranean basin. The fragility of the region is further aggravated by its sensitivity to climate change: the Mediterranean ecosystems are and will continue being among the most impacted by global climate change drivers.

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[110] Plan Bleu/RAC State of the Environment and Development Report (SoED 2020); Med2050 foresight exercise; First MedECC assessment report (MAR1 2020); MedECC Special Report on Climate Wefe Nexus : moving away from silo approaches (2024) and the special report on Coastals Risks: building resilience in coastal communities

[111] MedECC 1st Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)

[112] Additional descriptive elements shared with the Conference Room Paper (UNEP/MED WG.600/CRP.1) on 12 February 2025

6. The Strategy is formulated taking into account the outcomes of the **United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)** which put particular focus on the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the adopted UN Resolution on the **Pact for the Future**[113], that reaffirms the commitment to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs and urgently calls for accelerating progress towards achieving the Goals. ~~The United Nations process on the **Sustainable Development Goals** built upon the Millennium Development Goals and adopted a set of goals that is coherent and integrated into the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.~~

7. The Strategy equally takes into account the **UNGA Resolution 76/296 of July 2022**, **"Our Ocean, Our Future, Our Responsibility"**, which highlights that its goals can also be successfully **applied at regional level** and the **2024 UNEA 6, UNEP/EA.6/Res.15** on Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution, scale-up means of implementation to enhance capacity to deliver ocean-related SDGs, as well as the **United Nations' Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030**[114] with its vision 'The science we need for the ocean we want'.

8. The Strategy embeds the commitments and targets steaming from the **2015 UN Paris Agreement,** the **2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF),** the **European Green Deal,** the **International Maritime Organization's Strategy for reducing GHG emissions from ships**, the **Post-2020 SAPBIO**[115] **and other UNEP/MAP recently adopted policies, including Programmes of Measures to achieve Good Environmental Status of Mediterranean Sea and Coasts.**

9. The institutional landscape is characterized by ~~the emergence of~~ regional initiatives focusing on increased collaboration between the South, North and Easters shores of the Mediterranean, such as the **General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, Union for the Mediterranean** and **Horizon Europe** ~~2020~~ **initiative** and its Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters"[116] aims to protect and restore the health of ocean and waters by 2030 ~~2020~~. Other regional and sub-regional initiatives, such as the **Pact for the Mediterranean**, the **WestMed Initiative**[117] **and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)**[118], focus on ~~specific~~ sustainable development issues to be addressed at the Mediterranean level, looking also at the most significant sources of environmental degradation in the region.

10. The Strategy is built around the following vision:
A prosperous, climate resilient, and peaceful Mediterranean region in which people enjoy a high quality of life and where sustainable development takes place within the carrying capacity and in the limit of acceptable change of biologically diverse healthy, productive, conserved, restored wisely used and effectively managed ecosystems

11. This is achieved through common objectives, shared actions, strong involvement of all stakeholders, cooperation, solidarity, equity and participatory governance.

12. A set of **guiding principles** also informs the Strategy: the importance of an integrated approach to environmental and sustainable development planning; an openness to a plurality of future development models; a balanced approach to territorial development; the precautionary and polluter pays principles; a participatory approach to policy and decision-making; the importance of evidence-based policy; the reconciliation of long- and short-term in terms of planning and evaluation; transparency; and, the partnership between the MAP system and other international and regional organizations.

13. The Strategy follows a **structure** based on **six objectives** that lie in the interface between environment and development, and were chosen to provide scope for an integrated approach to address sustainability issues. The first Objective on climate change reflects the urgency to accelerate related adaptation actions, ~~three first~~ objectives 2, 3 and 4 reflect a territorial approach, while the ~~other~~ last two objectives are cross-cutting ones, addressing key policies and areas, as follows:

1 Address climate change with emphasis to adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security

[113 Resolution A/RES/79/1 adopted by the General Assembly on 22 September 2024
114 https://www.unesco.org/en/decades/ocean-decade
115 Decision IG.25/11 on the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO)]
116 Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters
117 https://westmed-initiative.ec.europa.eu
118 https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu

and Transition as a priority ~~for the Mediterranean~~

2 Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems ~~Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas~~

3 Promote sustainable resource management, ~~food production~~ and food security through sustainable forms of rural development and food systems

4 Plan-and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities

5 Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance

6 Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.

14. A set of **strategic directions** is formulated for each of the six overall objectives. The strategic directions are complemented by **national and regional actions**, as well as **flagship initiatives** and **targets**. The actions aim at providing guidance and inspiration for the most effective implementation of the Strategy. Not all countries may have the necessity or the resources to undertake all the proposed actions: it may be preferable to adapt the proposed actions to national needs. The **targets** are inspired by the global and regional agendas for sustainability and SDGs of relevance for the Mediterranean Region, considering its specificities, and monitor MSSD progress at Objectives' level' along with the framework of regional and global indicators.
The **flagship initiatives** have an upscaled key role in the framework of the MSSD implementation, as concrete initiatives and best practice that can lead the way in supporting the countries and stakeholders to partner up, commit and promote replication and spin off initiatives on sustainable development, both at regional and national level.

15. The scope and content of the six objectives of the Strategy can be summarised as follows:

Objective 1: Address climate change with emphasis to adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority ~~for the Mediterranean~~

16. According to the first MedECC Assessment Report[119], annual average temperatures on land and sea across the Mediterranean Basin are 1.54°C higher than during pre-industrial times and they are projected to rise until 2100 by an additional 3.8 to 6.5°C for a high greenhouse gas concentration scenario and 0.5 to 2.0°C for a scenario compatible with the long-term goal of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement to keep the global temperature well below +2°C above the pre-industrial level. While climate variability and change is evident in the Mediterranean, the consequences of climate change are expected to worsen already critical situations present in the region. The Strategy calls for progress towards a green, low-carbon and climate-resilient Mediterranean region, promoting complementary strategic directions, as follows: Increase scientific knowledge, education, raise awareness, and develop technical capacities to deal with climate change and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems; Accelerate the uptake of climate smart and climate resilient responses; Leverage existing and emerging climate finance mechanisms, including international and domestic instruments, and enhance the engagement of the private and finance sectors; Promote economy decarbonization energy transition and deployment of renewable energies; Strengthen national and local capacities on the application of nature-based solution for climate change adaptation and mitigation; Encourage institutional, policy and legal reforms for the effective mainstreaming of climate change responses into national and local development frameworks, particularly in the energy sector. The Strategy is complemented by the 2026 UNEP/MAP Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework.

Objective 2: Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems ~~Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas~~

17. The objective focusing on ~~"Sea and coasts"~~ healthy marine and coastal areas sits firmly and historically in the basin approach taken by the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) and the Barcelona Convention. The strategy for marine and coastal areas rests on strengthen implementation of and compliance with the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention and other regional policy instruments and initiatives supplemented by national approaches, as well as establish and enforce regulatory mechanisms, including the development of the approach and framework of Maritime Spatial Planning recognizing it as an essential component of integrated coastal zone management, for the sustainable management and development of coastal zones, including the prevention

[119] 2020 1st Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)

and control unsustainable open ocean resource exploitation. In complement, the promotion of well-connected ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures at national and Mediterranean level will further tackled biodiversity loss crises.

Objective 3: Promote sustainable resource management, ~~food production~~ and food security through sustainable forms of rural development and food systems

18. Rural areas in the Mediterranean are diverse in natural conditions, and social and economic structure, but share a potential for the establishment of new bases for economic and social development. The maintenance of the good status and health of rural ecosystems is fundamental for both biodiversity conservation and human well-being. The sustainable use, management and conservation of natural resources, rural development and food production and security are interdependent aspects that ensure the well-being of rural communities and provide significant inputs to downstream industries, from food processing to tourism. The Strategy calls for conservation and use of indigenous or traditional plant varieties and domestic animal breeds, valuing traditional knowledge and practices in rural management decisions. ~~It promotes networks of ecologically protected areas, enhancing stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss~~. The Strategy also recommends inclusive rural development, poverty eradication, women's empowerment, youth employment, equitable access to basic local services, as well as access of local producers to distribution channels and markets, including the tourism market. An improved forests management is equality tacked, both at national and regional level, while water desalinization and natural resources reuse approaches and plans are included.

Objective 4: Pan and manage sustainable and resilient Mediterranean cities

19. While the urbanization continues apace, in particular along its southern shores, most Mediterranean cities, notably the coastal ones, are not being managed sustainably in relation to their carrying capacities and are insufficiently resilient. Yet as engines of economic development, innovation and creativity, cities are critical for sustainable development, as the climate friendly cities agenda shows. For those reasons, a new, sustainable, inclusive and creative approach to planning and managing
Mediterranean cities is the best hope for riparian urban settlements. Key elements of this approach are the following: use inclusive urban planning and management processes, promote socio-economic cohesion, reduce environmental pressures, increase resilience, protect and rehabilitate historical areas, and promote green ~~buildings~~ infrastructures and renewable energies and improve energy efficiency and sustainable production, use of sustainable products and effective waste management within the context of a more circular economy as well as foster sustainable consumption patterns among citizens. Seven strategic directions put the emphasis on the following recommendations: Apply holistic and integrated spatial planning processes; Encourage inclusive urbanization; Promote the protection and rehabilitation of historic urban areas; Promote sustainable waste management; Promote urban spatial patterns and technological options that reduce the demand for transportation, stimulate sustainable mobility and improve urban air quality; Promote green buildings and reduce ecological footprint of the built environment; Enhance urban resilience in order to reduce vulnerability to risks from natural and human-induced hazards.

Objective 5: Transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance

20. A green economy – called blue economy when applied to the coastal, marine and maritime sectors – is one that promotes sustainable development whilst improving human well-being and social equity, and significantly reducing environmental risks, climate change impacts and ecological scarcities. Circular economy offers a transformative approach that prioritizes the continual reduction, reuse, refurbishment, and recycling of products and materials. A circular economy in the blue and green sectors refers to a sustainable economic framework that integrates ecological principles into economic activities, emphasizing the responsible use of natural resources, minimizing waste, and fostering regeneration~~. Besides being about renewable energy, waste management, and sustainable consumption and production, the green economy concept draws on new and emerging paradigms such as the circular economy, the collaborative economy and the functional economy~~. The green economy explicitly includes the objectives of decent jobs creation for all, particularly youth and women, and social inclusion, in order to eradicate poverty and promote a more healthy and just society. The Strategy encourages the measurement of development, progress and well-being, as well as environmental friendly and social innovation. It promotes sustainable consumption and production patterns, as well as the integration of sustainability principles into decision-making on public and private investment. The Strategy also recommends a greener and more inclusive market that integrates the true environmental and social cost of products and services. The Strategy is complemented by the UNEP/MAP Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan for the Mediterranean.

21. A key pillar of the transition to a green and blue economy is finance that supports green and sustainable activities. Green investments focus specifically on environmental benefits—such as reducing carbon emissions,

conserving biodiversity, or investing in renewable energy solutions. Sustainable investments aim to achieve a balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection, thus ensuring long-term resilience and prosperity. Mediterranean countries require green and sustainable investments and related economic tools to support their transformation and adapt/mitigate climate and environmental change. To achieve this, it is essential to establish a common regional Framework for Green and Sustainable Investments in the Mediterranean.

Objective 6: Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.

22. Governance is a crosscutting objective and concerns the inclusion and engagement with non-state actors in decision- making processes, including local authorities, women, youth, private sector and financial institutions and using new forms of cooperation arrangements to involve citizens. Regional challenges for ~~environmental governance~~ sustainable development include fragmentation of responsibility, a reinforced role of sub-national and local authorities uncoordinated and non-results- based planning and implementation, as well as weak human and financial resources in the public sector, particularly at the local level. The Strategy for improving environmental governance in the Mediterranean rests on five pillars: Enhance international dialogue and cooperation, including on emergency-preparedness; Strengthen the role, awareness and capacities of sub-national and local governments/ municipalities for implementing national and subnational sustainable development strategies and considering synergies and tradeoffs between different policies and sectors. Promote whole of society stakeholders' engagement including youth and women, financial institutions, private sector to secure inclusive processes and integrity in decision-making; Promote implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements, including through policy coherence based on inter-ministerial coordination; Promote education and research; and, ~~Enhance~~ Strengthen regional capabilities for information management and enhance the promotion of evidence-informed policymaking and foresight.

23. The third chapter of the Strategy focuses on **implementation, funding and monitoring** aspects, as follows: Institutional structures and processes for the implementation of the Strategy; Financing the implementation of the Strategy; and, Monitoring system and regional dashboard on the implementation of the Strategy.

24. Although facilitated by the **MAP system** and its Components, it is the participation and active role of all stakeholders that will play a decisive role in the delivery of the Strategy. The MAP system provides leadership and guidance with respect to implementing the Strategy. The UNEP/MAP action plans formulated with a view to implementing the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention, as well as other key existing regional mechanisms and instruments, are essential tools for implementing the Strategy. The MAP system is of primary importance to provide support and technical guidance to the Contracting Parties to the Convention, as well as for coordinating implementation actions and monitoring processes. The **Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development** and its **Steering Committee** are a key ~~structure~~ Bodies within this system for leading and supporting the implementation of the Strategy its evaluation and update processes.

25. **The countries** are invited to use the Strategy as a framework for a better integration of sustainable development into their national policies and to build horizontal synergies between different government sectors and vertical synergies between different levels of government, from local to central and vice-versa. **Intergovernmental and regional and sub-regional organizations** also have a very important role, working in tandem with each other and with the MAP system, to facilitate synergies with countries using the Strategy as a common platform.

26. **For civil society**, the Strategy contains a set of strategic directions that inform its work along with other partners, and provides fertile grounds for the development of projects. Civil society can also take up important tasks related to awareness and sensitization. **The sub-national and local authorities, private sector, youth and women** are another key partners, notably in the ~~emerging~~ circular green and blue economy, not only through corporate social responsibility, but also through more sustainable consumption and production processes. The analytical tools that will allow the forecasting, planning and assessment of sustainable development-related impacts and actions need to be developed with **the scientific community**, which itself needs to direct its research capacity in support of policymaking. For **funding bodies**, the Strategy contains a set of widely-agreed regional objectives, as well as strategic directions within these objectives, which will help such bodies to position and assess funding proposals aimed at advancing sustainable development in the region.

27. Putting in place adequate **institutional structures** is a key priority in providing for effective implementation of the Strategy. The Strategy in this area rests on two pillars: Put in place or strengthen structures for sustainable development implementation at national and regional scale, and ensuring their adequate resourcing; and, Establish regional processes for the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy.

28. Implementation of the Strategy, based on the ambitious but necessary and realistic vision of establishing a sustainable Mediterranean on strong economic and social foundations, needs significant **financial resources**. The Strategy includes a series of actions to strengthen capacity for financing its implementation such as a project portfolio, capacity building processes and an investment facility for funding sustainable development actions in the Mediterranean.

29. A comprehensive **monitoring system** and relevant **indicators** are necessary for the implementation of the Strategy. Two forms of monitoring are required, both the follow-up of the implementation of the actions recommended in the Strategy, such as the number of countries implementing an action, and the progress of the wider sustainable development issues, such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, for instance. While both are relevant for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy, the indicators and approaches are different. Therefore, the regular monitoring of the Strategy ~~will be~~ is constantly developed through the ~~establishment of a~~ **dashboard of sustainability indicators** populated for the Mediterranean, the MSSD Dashboard.

Annex IV
Welcome Speeches and Opening Remarks/ Statements

Hon. Gabriel Amard (France) – Rapporteur de l'APM au droit à l'eau et à l'assainissement de qualité et Chef de la délégation auprès de l'APM

21e réunion de la Commission méditerranéenne de développement durable (CMDD) des Nations unies

Corinthe, Grèce, 24 - 26 juin 2025

Mesdames et Messieurs, chers collègues,

C'est avec gravité que je prends la parole devant vous en tant que Rapporteur de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Méditerranée sur le droit à l'eau et à l'assainissement de qualité. La protection de la santé environnementale des régions euroméditerranéennes et du Golfe est une priorité et à ce titre, je suis intervenu il y a deux semaines à la 3e Conférence des Nations unies sur la protection des océans à Nice.

La stratégie méditerranéenne pour le développement durable ne cesse de mettre en exergue les défis environnementaux, auxquels nous sommes confrontés et continueront de l'être davantage dans les dix prochaines années en l'absence de mesures concrètes et ambitieuses.

Nous connaissons la sur-pollution actuelle de la mer Méditerranée et l'accentuation des sécheresses d'eau douce de notre bassin de vie. Ces crises sont maintenant documentées et audibles. C'est pourquoi, je souhaite vous alerter, ici, toutes et tous, sur une autre crise. Une crise sanitaire et environnementale sinueuse, non perceptible à l'œil nu et pourtant déjà mortelle pour l'ensemble du vivant.

En effet, l'ensemble des pays du bassin de vie méditerranéen et du Golfe est déjà contaminé par les substances perfluoroalkylées et polyfluoroalkylées. Les PFAS. Ces polluants persistants.

L'Autorité européenne de sécurité des aliments (EFSA) est formelle : l'alimentation est la voie principale d'exposition des populations humaines aux PFAS.

Les PFAS utilisés dans l'industrie se retrouvent rejetés dans l'environnement, contaminant la biodiversité et s'intégrant dans la chaîne alimentaire. Des substances comme le beflubutamid, le flonicamid et le flurochloridone sont même directement utilisées dans les pesticides destinés à l'agriculture. Les pesticides contenant des PFAS se retrouvent donc servis sur un plateau dans notre alimentation, dans notre corps.

Le rapport du 19 juin 2025 de l'association Générations futures dresse un constat édifiant de la présence des PFAS dans l'alimentation. Basée sur des données officielles des Etats membres de l'Union européenne, il révèle que sur les 7 PFAS réglementées dans l'UE : 69 % des poissons, 55 % des abats, 55 % des mollusques, 39 % des œufs, 27 % des crustacés, 23 % des laits et 14 % des viandes contiennent au moins l'un des quatre PFAS réglementés. Sept autres PFAS dangereux, mais non réglementés, sont également détectés, notamment dans les abats, les poissons et les œufs.

Si les seuils de contamination sont effarants, il convient de souligner que ce rapport va dans le sens des autorités publiques. L'EFSA, avait déjà déclaré que les produits de la mer, les œufs et les viandes sont les aliments contribuant le plus à l'exposition au PFOS et au PFOA.

En France, l'Académie des Sciences tirait les mêmes conclusions dans son rapport de mars 2025 : « *la viande, les œufs et les produits de la mer représentent une voie de contamination significative* ». Elle

ajoute qu'aujourd'hui, plusieurs PFAS à longue chaîne (PFOA, PFOS, PFNA, PFHxS) sont systématiquement mesurés dans le sérum sanguin des populations humaines des pays industrialisés, dès la vie *in utero*. Leur omniprésence, même chez des personnes non exposées professionnellement, suggère que la principale source de contamination provient de l'usage généralisé des PFAS dans les produits de consommation (alimentation) et par les industries (agriculture).

Toujours selon ce rapport, en France, l'exposition aux PFAS a été évaluée dans le cadre du programme Esteban, qui a mesuré 17 PFAS, sur la période 2014-2016, dans le sérum d'enfants et d'adultes. Le PFOA et le PFOS, principaux contributeurs à l'imprégnation, ont été détectés chez 100 % des participants, parmi lesquels la moitié est contaminée au-delà du seuil de sécurité actuellement admis, formulé par la Commission allemande de biosurveillance humaine (HBM).

Pire encore, les études de l'association Global 2000 et le réseau Pesticide Action Network Europe (PAN Europe) mettent en exergue que le TFA, polluant persistant le plus répandu, n'est pas contrôlé, tandis qu'il serait présent dans les aliments du quotidien, tel le pain, les pâtes et les céréales. Si au sein de l'Union européenne, 20 PFAS seraient contrôlés pour l'eau potable, il ne serait que 3 pour l'alimentation. Pour rappel, les substances PFAS sont une famille de plus de 16 000 substances ! Une partie de la Méditerranée n'en contrôlerait que 3 concernant la chaîne alimentaire !

Cela a des conséquences sur notre santé : l'EFSA a indiqué dès 2020, puis l'Agence européenne pour l'environnement, que l'exposition aux polluants persistants avait des conséquences néfastes directs sur le système reproducteur des hommes et femmes, le développement du fœtus *in utero*. Une exposition renforcerait le risque de déclarer des maladies thyroïdiennes, maladies inflammatoires de l'intestin, des maladies cardiométaboliques. Par ailleurs, en novembre 2023, le Centre international de Recherche sur le Cancer évaluait la cancérogénicité du PFOA et PFOS, comme cancérogène et cancérigène pour l'humain.

Enfin, des boues d'épuration contenant des PFAS sont régulièrement épandues sur les cultures destinées à l'alimentation. Un cercle vicieux est en marche : le peu de dépollution d'un côté ne cesse qu'à renforcer la pollution d'un site de l'autre.

L'un des seuls moyens efficaces connus à ce jour, pour dépolluer les milieux des PFAS consiste à les capter grâce à des charbons actifs. Mais faute de filière nationale de régénération, ces charbons sont souvent exportés ou stockés, sans traitement. De plus, les macérats issus de la potabilisation, qui sont souvent contaminés par les PFAS, devraient être intégrés dans les dispositifs de traitement et de surveillance, au même titre que les charbons actifs. A ce jour, les macérats, pollués, sont remis dans la nature. On dépollue très peu d'un côté, pour repolluer davantage de l'autre. Toute la chaîne du vivant est contaminée et les processus actuels de dépollution ne permettent pas d'améliorer cette situation, au contraire.

Quant aux déchets issus de ces opérations, ils ne doivent pas être traités dans les filières classiques de gestion des déchets ménagers. En effet, les déchets ménagers ultimes, lorsqu'ils sont incinérés, le sont généralement à des températures allant de 800 à 900°C, tandis que selon l'Académie des Sciences et l'Institut national de l'environnement industriel et des risques (INERIS), la destruction

efficace des molécules de PFAS nécessiterait des températures d'au moins 1 400 degrés. Le traitement actuel est donc insuffisant pour neutraliser ces substances.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Les PFAS ne connaissent pas de frontières. Ils circulent par l'eau, les sols, l'air, les produits de consommation. Ils empoisonnent, respectivement et sans discrimination la biodiversité et les êtres vivants, animaux humains et non-humains.

Par conséquent, notre réponse doit être commune, ambitieuse et coordonnée au niveau méditerranéen et du Golfe. Des réponses nationales unilatérales et faibles ne feraient que renforcer les inégalités concernant un environnement sain et le droit à une vie saine. Nous ne pouvons être divisés sur le sujet. La création de « paradis PFAS » et le renforcement de « clusters de cancer » ne sont pas une possibilité.

Nous avons les outils pour agir. La Convention de Barcelone et en particulier son « Protocole sur les sources terrestres » offre déjà un cadre solide et juridiquement contraignant à cet effet. Les PFAS relèvent clairement de son champ d'application.

Par conséquent, nous, parlementaires, appelons cette Commission à veiller à ce qu'ils soient mentionnés dans notre Stratégie, comme demandé par **l'APM.**

Nous recommandons également à tous les États méditerranéens, côtiers et enclavés, d'utiliser cet outil contre les PFAS, d'adopter des seuils régionaux contraignants, de renforcer le réseau de surveillance PNUE/APM pour suivre leur présence, et de protéger le droit à l'eau potable et à l'assainissement sûr, au cœur de l'ODD 6.

L'APM souhaite que notre commission joue un rôle moteur dans la reconnaissance des PFAS comme menace majeure pour la santé et pour l'environnement, et qu'elle œuvre à l'adoption de normes communes de surveillance, de restriction et de dépollution.
Notre bassin de vie doit devenir un exemple de coopération environnementale.

L'APM est depuis longtemps investie sur les questions de protection du vivant. Elle défend l'adoption d'un traité international global sur les plastiques, qui limiterait la pollution marine, tout en encourageant ses membres à ratifier rapidement le Traité sur la haute mer. Permettez-moi de rappeler, par exemple, qu'en avril 2024, **l'APM** et le PNUE/APM ont collaboré à l'élaboration du premier *Guide parlementaire pour la protection de la mer et des côtes méditerranéennes*, un outil phare destiné à aider les législateurs à transformer les accords environnementaux internationaux en lois nationales exécutoires.

Enfin, permettez-moi d'évoquer un autre enjeu majeur pour nos régions : les crimes environnementaux. Un phénomène souvent sous-estimé, mais qui ne cesse de croître, finançant d'autres activités illicites et le crime organisé.

En tant que **l'APM**, nous avons contribué à maintenir cette question au sommet de l'agenda méditerranéen, ayant adopté notre première Résolution sur ce sujet en 2010, et vous vous souviendrez peut-être de notre Rapport sur les « Navires des poisons »

À **l'APM**, nous estimons qu'il est crucial de les inclure dans notre Stratégie, et nous rendrons compte des résultats de la réunion d'aujourd'hui lors de la prochaine conférence du groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur les crimes affectant l'environnement, qui se tiendra à Vienne le mois prochain.

Nous sommes convaincus que les Parlementaires de notre bassin de vie ont un rôle à jouer et nous parlerons d'une seule voix lors de la COP30 à Belem, en novembre prochain.

Pour conclure, je souhaiterais citer Rachel Carson, biologiste marine et pionnière de l'écologie : *« Dans chaque verre d'eau que nous buvons, dans chaque molécule que porte notre sang, c'est toute la mémoire du vivant qui circule. En polluant l'eau, nous brisons le lien qui nous relie au reste du monde. »*
Je vous remercie.

Annex V
Conclusions and Recommendations

21st Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)
(Corinth, Greece, 24-26 June 2025

Conclusions and Recommendations

Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting

1. The President and the Coordinator highlighted the pivotal importance of the 21st MCSD Meeting, hereafter the Meeting, for the validation of the updated Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) as key regional cooperation framework that is fully aligned with the overall process and momentum of renewed strong commitment and vision towards sustainability and acceleration of the green transition in the region, through the constructive collaboration of all stakeholders.

Agenda item 2: Organizational Matters

2. The Meeting expressed gratitude for the cooperative approach and vision to the outgoing President Anne-France Didier, France, in leading the MCSD in the biennium 2023-2025. The Meeting equally thanked the other Members of the Steering Committee, i.e. Mr. Mitja Bricelj, Slovenia, Mr. Mohammed Maktit, Morocco, Mr. Abderraja Salhi, Tunisia, Mr. Najib Saab, Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED), Mr. Almotaz Abadi Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Rapporteur Mr. Josep Canals Molina, MedCities.

3. The Meeting elected its Steering Committee in accordance with the MCSD Constitutive Documents, Rule 17 of the Rules of Procedure, as follows:

- President: Mr. Mohammed Maktit, Morocco
- Vice-President: Ms. Samah Saleh, Egypt, (*ex officio,* as representative of the forthcoming Presidency of the Contracting Parties)
- Vice-President: Ms. Branka Pivčević Novak, Croatia
- Vice-President: Ms. Andri Christoforou, Cyprus
- Vice-President: Mr. Maher Mahjoub, Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN-MED)
- Vice-President: Mr. Michael J. Scoullos, Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development (COMPSUD)
- Rapporteur: Mr. Josep Canals Molina, MedCities

AGENDA Item 3: Report by the Coordinator on Sustainable Development Activities for the period June 2023 – May 2025

4. The Meeting welcomed the good progress on Sustainable Development activities for the period June 2023 – May 2025, including the advancement of the current flagship initiatives of MSSD, and invited to further promote engagement with diverse stakeholders, communities, civil society and private sectors, in order to ensure the MSSD is developed at local level, thus supporting a progressively effective impact. In the same line Meeting equally recommended to reinforce the cooperation with regional relevant networks.

5. The Meeting also recommended that the MCSD Members upgrade their work at national level and keep high in their policy agendas the ambition of the MSSD and capacity to impact the sustainable development in the Mediterranean, also as a supporting enabler of the stability in the

region.

6. The Meeting appreciated the overview of the progress of the MSSD Dashboard, the further work developed on core indicators and on the potential new three indicators, stressing that the monitoring process of the MSSD is key to understand the actual and future progress of the Strategy.

7. The Meeting recommended to utilize the MSSD indicators not only to inform the policy level but also to inform the civil society and broader stakeholders on the evolution on main challenges they are concerned with, and in order to promote engagement and commitment on sustainable development objectives.

8. The Meeting congratulated France for the organization of a visionary UNOC-3 as well as the Secretariat both for the successful celebration of the 50th anniversary of UNEP/MAP and the 30th anniversary of the Post-Rio Barcelona Convention, as well as for the Declaration of the Ministers of the Mediterranean a kay achievement of the UNOC-3.

9. The Meeting acknowledged that 2025 is a pivotal year at regional level, marked by key achievements as the UNOC-3 and its Ministerial Declaration, the EU Ocean Pact and the EU New Pact for the Mediterranean that clearly confirm a common high-level and forward-looking engagement and momentum for the Mediterranean, providing the means to upgrade and boost the implementation of Sustainable Development. To this end the Meeting also acknowledged that the Contracting Parties are expected to push their agendas and work at national level to undertake this momentum that will culminate with the validation of the updated MSSD at the COP24, in December 2025 in Cairo, Egypt.

10. The Meeting concluded that it is important to make the MCSD more visible both at national and regional level and that next year's 30th Anniversary of the MCSD will be instrumental to this purpose.

Agenda Item 4: Evaluation of the 2016-2025 MSSD implementation

11. The Meeting welcomed the MSSD Final Evaluation as a good assessment that has well integrated the inputs provided by the extended MCSD Steering Committee meetings held in 2024, while it recommended to raise the attention on some key gaps identified by the Final Evaluation, notably on the need to further invest in outreach, visibility and communication to ensure a boarder and stronger engagement with multi-level stakeholders, as well as on the financial means of the MSSD to ensure concrete impact.

12. The Meeting acknowledged the achievements and the gaps identified by the MSSD Final Evaluation, welcomed the participatory approach of the evaluation method and approved the document.

13. The Meeting also recommended, for the future, to consider including juridical indicators among the MSSD indicators in order to monitor how laws relevant to sustainable development are effectively implemented at national level.

Presentation at the end of the 1st day of the 21st MCSD Meeting: Report "The Mediterranean by 2050: A Foresight by Plan Bleu" (MED2050 Report)

14. The Meeting welcomed the MED2050 Report coordinated by Plan Bleu, appreciating the impressive work done expressing their concern about the alarming trends of the environmental situation and climate change and highlighting the need for urgent actions to bring the region back to sustainability paths. The Meeting acknowledged that the foresight scenario do not reflect the 'one fits all' approach; the scenario are rather a tool to support the countries to identify the combinations of responses to national and regional challenges that could better fit a sustainable future. The Meeting

also recommended to focus on which actions need to be planned and undertaken as response to the scenario.

Agenda Item 5: MSSD 2026-2035 and its flagship initiatives

15. After a detailed review of the draft MSSD and a productive and detailed discussion including on the targets and indicators, on narrative, and after having reviewed the full list of MSSD flagship initiatives, the Meeting approved the updated MSSD 2026-2035, attached as Annex I to these Conclusions and Recommendations, and recommended its submission to the 24th Meeting of the Contracting Parties of December 2025 (COP24) for its consideration and approval following an editorial finetuning of the document by the Secretariat.

16. The Meeting acknowledged that the MSSD flagship initiatives are a key enabler for the implementation of the MSSD, therefore the Meeting recommended the MCSD Members to further get involved and support the flagship initiatives, while reaching out to broader partners and stakeholders.

Agenda item 6: Specific Issues

a) MCSD Membership for the Biennium 2026-2027

17. With reference to the Non-contracting Party MCSD Members, the Meeting appreciated the detailed presentation of the received expressions of interest, and after some discussion and based on the recommendations of the 26th Steering Committee of the MCSD held on 23 June 2025, concluded to recommend the following candidates for the consideration of the COP24:

- Local authorities Group
    a. Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)
    b. Fispmed Network, Sustainable development and the fight against poverty in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (FISPMED)

- Socio-economic Group
    a. Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA)
    b. UNIVERDE Foundation

- NGOs Group
    a. Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)
    b. Worldwide Fund for Nature - Mediterranean **(**WWF-MED)
    c. Oceanographic Institute of Monaco
- IGOs Group
    a. Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE)
    b. Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) (to be confirmed)

- Parliamentarian Group
  The Meeting concluded to renew the mandate of the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development (COMPSUD) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) for another mandate of four years.

18. The Meeting welcomed the proposal of the Secretariat to expand the category of the Non-Contracting Party Members of the MCSD for including regional and sub-regional organizations of women and youth working in the field of environment and sustainable development that meet the criteria of MAP Partnership in line with the relevant COP Decisions, bringing the total number of the MCSD Members to 42.

b) Sustainability Considerations in UNEP/MAP Programme of Work 2026-2027

c) Inputs of the 21st MCSD Meeting to COP24

19. The Meeting acknowledged the Sustainability Considerations in UNEP/MAP Programme of Work 2026-2027, and with reference to the elaboration of the ambitions and vision of the MCSD on Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean Region to be embedded in the Ministerial Declaration of the COP24, it agreed to delegate the task to the MCSD Steering Committee (MCSD SC).

20. The MCSD SC, after elaborating the first draft with the support of the Secretariat, will share it with the MCSD Members and the final version will be submitted as Information Document to the MAP Focal Points Meeting and as Working Document to COP24. The President of the MCSD will be invited to attend the MAP Focal Point Meeting to present the work of the MCSD as well as to the COP24 to present the MSSD Decision together with the Secretariat.

d) 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas

21. The MCSD welcomed the work done for the update of the 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean and encouraged the active participation by Climate Change experts designated by the Contracting Parties to attend the Regional Meeting of 8-9 July 2025 (Istanbul, Türkiye) and to ensure that the document is finalized and submitted to MAP Focal Points and COP24.

Agenda Item 7: Next Meeting of the MCSD

22. The MCSD decided that the next Meeting will be held in 2027 and encouraged its Members to host the Meeting.

Annex VI
UNOC-3 Declaration of the Ministers of the Mediterranean

Declaration of the Ministers of the Mediterranean

Mediterranean Day of the United Nations Ocean Conference (June 10, 2025)

We, the Ministers of the Environment and heads of delegations of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, gathered today to reaffirm our common commitment to the protection and preservation of our Mediterranean Sea, an invaluable common good, as a regional contribution to the global efforts aiming at achieving SDG14.

We celebrate the 50 years of UNEP/MAP and the 30 years of Post Rio Barcelona Convention, appreciating their pioneer work and achievements and, as Contracting Parties to the Convention, commit to continue cooperating and act for the benefit of people and nature.

We welcome the third edition of the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC-3), in Nice (France), as a key milestone to accelerate and mobilize all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean and reaffirm our will to effectively contribute to the success of this event. To this aim, we commit to properly mainstream UNOC-3 relevant outcomes in our work, in particular with a view to the 24th Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP24) to be held in Cairo (Egypt) next 2-5 December 2025.

We thank the four Champion Countries as decided by COP23, namely Slovenia, France, Egypt and Spain, and the hosts of UNOC-3, France and Costa Rica, for the organization of this major milestone in the life of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention.

1. *Alarmed by* the consequences of the environmental planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and land degradation in the region, *we are determined* to continue supporting the achievement and the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 14, which has strong interlinkages with many other SDGs due to its cross-cutting nature, the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. *We affirm* the need to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources by implementing international law as reflected at the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of The Future We Want.

2. *Noting with concern* that due to anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases, the rate of climate change in the Mediterranean basin, both historical and projected, is faster than global trends and deeply concerned that 2024 was the hottest year on record according to the World Meteorological Organization, *we reiterate* our commitment to integrating climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience measures into our policies, including maritime policies, compatible with a trajectory to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial level. *We will* support actions and initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the effects of climate change, promote decarbonization especially of energy production through renewable energy sources as well as to promote nature-based solutions and strengthen the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems to the effects of climate change, considering the local context and country determinations for development. *We will* integrate them, as appropriate, in our nationally determined contributions to be submitted ahead of the 2025 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP30).

3. *We support* the scientific assessment work conducted by the Mediterranean Network of Experts on Climate Change and the Environment (MedECC) on the impact of climate change on the Mediterranean basin, and *call for* the protection and the restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems, particularly by advocating for a new approach based on the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus, and to intensify, as appropriate, ocean-based mitigation measures.

4. *We welcome* progress towards implementing the integrated source-to-sea approach through Integrated River Basin Management planning and enhanced interregional cooperation between the Mediterranean, the Danube and Black Sea to improve the climate resilience of river basins and coasts and enhance the health of coastal and marine ecosystems, taking into account the strong interlinkages between SDG 14 and SDG 6.

5. *We welcome* activities for integrating Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Zone Management to enable sustainable management and planning to ensure the development of sustainable and resilient blue economy as a vehicle for green transition, together with the application of Strategic Environmental and Environmental Impact Assessments as important tools to integrate environmental consideration in MSP plans, with the view to applying an ecosystem-based approach, as agreed at COP 23 in Portorož.

6. *Deeply concerned* about the rapid deterioration of biodiversity worldwide, particularly in the Mediterranean, at an unprecedented rate, *we commit* to strengthening and expanding the network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as well as establishing Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean Sea with the aim to protect 30% of the Mediterranean Sea by 2030, ensuring effective conservation and sustainable management of the protected areas, including OECMs, and their integration into national and regional policies, thus contributing to target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), through the implementation of the Post-2020 SAP BIO for the marine and coastal environment, adopted at COP 22 of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

7. *We encourage* Contracting Parties that have not yet done so to take action to ratify, approve, accept or accede to the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), as a contribution from the Mediterranean countries to its early entry into force.

8. *We renew* our commitment *to* take measures to ensure the protection of marine endangered species in the Mediterranean and *we will* support the dissemination of best practices to combat, control or manage non-indigenous species and the implementation of effective monitoring actions and coordinated management measures based on the most relevant scientific data.

9. *We reiterate* our commitment *to* raise the level of ambition and implement targeted actions to accelerate progress towards achieving Good Environmental Status and the SDGs, considering the very important processes of revision and update of the Ecosystem Approach RoadMap and of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD). These will take into account key findings of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report and the fact that work shall continue to achieve and maintain Good Environmental Status of the marine and coastal environment.

10. *Aware of* the ecological importance of marine and coastal ecosystems, we commit to intensifying conservation and restoration efforts for these ecosystems, in particular the Posidonia seagrass meadows *inter alia*, by supporting the Mediterranean Posidonia Network (MPN) and the related Flagship Initiative under the MSSD. *We affirm* our willingness to promote sustainable management practices and protection measures against anthropogenic pressures to preserve these critical habitats for marine biodiversity.

11. *We commit to* decisive and collective action to ensure sustainable fisheries and to strengthen the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which poses a threat to the sustainable exploitation of marine resources in the Mediterranean. *We call* for the reinforcement of the international legal framework to fight IUU fishing activities, by ratifying the Food and Agriculture Organization's Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA), the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Cape Town agreement on fishing vessels safety, the International Labour Organization's convention on work conditions on fishing vessels and the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, as well as WTO negotiations on additional provisions on fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing.

12. *We welcome* the efforts and the collective work for the implementation of the Particularly Sensitive Sea Area in the North Western Mediterranean Sea, a key tool for protecting marine mammals from collision risks designated by the IMO and commit to contribute to the effective application of its associated protection measures.

13. *We welcome* the outcome of the 83rd session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the IMO aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping, in line with the 2023 IMO GHG Strategy and recommend the formal adoption of the proposed amendments to MARPOL Annex VI at the next MEPC extraordinary session to reach net-zero emissions from international shipping by or around 2050 i.e. close to, 2050.

14. *We welcome* the entry into force of the Sulfur Emission Control Area (SECA) in the Mediterranean, as decided by IMO MEPC.361 (79), as a crucial step in reducing air pollution from ships. *We commit* to rigorously applying SECA regulations, including through the ratification of MARPOL Annex VI, and promoting clean technologies for maritime transport to protect human health and the marine environment, and to accelerate our work in exploring the feasibility for the designation of a Nitrogen Oxide Emission Control Area (NECA) in the Mediterranean as a whole.

15. *We encourage* all stakeholders to integrate into their decision-making processes the work of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development and consider as appropriate the outcome of the Mediterranean 2050 Foresight report, coordinated by the Plan Bleu Regional Activity Center of UNEP/MAP.

16. *Noting with concern* the high and rapidly increasing levels of plastic pollution in the Mediterranean Sea as well as globally, with adverse effects on both human health and the environment, *we affirm* our determination and ambition to work together, in line with United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolution 5/14, towards fulfilling the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee's (INC) mandate to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastics[1] as highlighted by the Contracting Parties at the 2023 Barcelona Convention COP in Portoroz Ministerial Declaration.

17. *Reaffirming* the commitments made at previous Barcelona Convention COPs, we call for the identification, at the upcoming COPs, of relevant measures to implement the Barcelona Convention and support the contracting parties in the implementation of the future international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, building on the Mediterranean experiences and the well-established circular economy models, sustainable production and consumption patterns, and environmentally sound management of plastic waste, among other tools and measures to address marine litter, including plastic marine litter.

[1] Egypt set a reservation regarding "the full life cycle of plastics", since Egypt would like to add at the end of the paragraph "starting from product design"

18. In that regard*, we will* strengthen the implementation of the legally binding Regional Plan for Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean under the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol), by taking concrete actions coherent to the implementation timeline of the measures provided for in the Plan to achieve a substantial reduction and prevention of pollution, with the intention to eliminate the release of plastics into the environment, through circular economy and source-to-sea approaches.

19. *We will* promote policies to phase out the production and consumption of unnecessary and problematic plastic products, based on criteria to be defined under the international legally binding instrument, in favour of safe, sustainable, reusable and cost efficient alternatives that are better for human health and the environment, taking into account specific national circumstances. *We therefore will* work on regulating and progressively eliminating, by 2030, the production and consumption of the most environmentally damaging single-use plastics and the use of chemicals of concern in plastics, based on criteria to be defined under the international legally binding instrument, especially those that come in direct contact with consumers and those most likely to cause harm or hinder circularity. *We also recognize* the importance of our constant monitoring of and combatting plastic litter in the marine environment in the Mediterranean Sea, and encourage the use of innovative technologies to remove this waste, including microplastics, to protect and restore marine ecosystems.

20. *We reiterate* our commitment to invest in effective wastewater treatment and waste management infrastructures, including recycling and material recovery facilities, and to implement national plans to gradually reduce and ultimately close coastal dump sites and where national geographical circumstances allow, landfills, in order to drastically reduce plastic waste and microplastics entering the marine environment. To achieve these goals, *we will* promote the mobilization of financial resources from a wide variety of sources as well as support research and development of new environmentally friendly technologies and materials.

21. *We decide* to strengthen cooperation among Mediterranean coastal countries and actors to harmonize policies, taking into account national circumstances as appropriate, and share best practices in plastic waste management, particularly within the framework of the Barcelona Convention and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). In this regard, *we support* the Mediterranean circular economy network Circe.med.

22. *We reiterate* our commitment to enhance action and synergies with relevant regional frameworks and agreements in particular the UfM, the General Fisheries Commission of the Mediterranean, Ramoge and Pelagos. *We also encourage* 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 the WestMED initiative.

23. *Aware of* the strong attractiveness of the Mediterranean region as a tourist destination and the impacts of unsustainable tourism practices on natural resources, and recalling the 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, *we will* work on promoting the transition to a sustainable blue economy in national strategies and, in particular, on supporting the Flagship Initiative on sustainable tourism under the MSSD.

24. *We recognize* the role of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) in assisting countries and regions in addressing marine pollution and enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources, as well as their contributions to the achievement of SDG14 and the ocean related targets of the 2030 Agenda, and *commit* to raise the profile of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system and promote its involvement, as appropriate, at relevant ocean-related global events with the participation and support of the Secretariat.

25. *We reaffirm* our commitment to involve youth in environmental issues, including those related to climate change and decision-making processes innovatively, including through modernizing education programs and promoting education for sustainable development and global citizenship in both formal and informal settings to raise young people's awareness on the importance of the environment and sustainable development from an early age and as an instrumental tool for the achievement of the SDGs. To this aim, *we promote* inter-generational cooperation processes and global initiatives, such as but not limited to Youth4Climate, co-led by Italy and the United Nations Development Program, as effective tools to support youth-led and youth-inclusive solutions. *We reaffirm* the importance of facilitating public access to information and public participation, including that of civil society, which is key to ensure the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

26. *We call* on all actors, including local authorities, international organizations, financial institutions, civil society, academia, and the private sector including industry, to join us in this vital mission in the spirit of solidarity and reinforced regional collaboration. Together, we can look back to see the incredible path we went through for the last 50 years and look forward to ensure a sustainable future for the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal communities through the effective implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.