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Agenda Item 5: Enhancing the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme for the Mediterranean Sea and Coast

Revised Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme: Main Elements and Outline

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UNEP/MAP
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Note by the Secretariat

The Integrated Monitoring Programme for the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) was established in 2016 during COP19 (Decision IG.22/7), containing elements pertinent to its principles and structure, integrated monitoring and assessment, integrated data and information system, as well as monitoring and assessment requirements for 11 Ecological Objectives (EOs) and the corresponding 27 Common and/or Candidate Indicators (CIs). All these information was further detailed in the IMAP Guidance (UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG.22/Inf.7).

IMAP implementation has advanced significantly since 2016, resulting into national IMAP-based monitoring programmes for most if not all EOs and CIs, and most importantly the preparation of the 2017 and 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Reports (MED QSR).

Based on the experience gained from IMAP implementation at national, sub-regional and regional levels, and the assessment finding of the recent 2023 MED QSR (being also based on the findings of the 2017 MED QSR); the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, through Decision IG.26/3 of COP23, called for revising Ecosystem Approach (EcAP) and IMAP, and in particular the enhancement of IMAP implementation and strengthening of national monitoring and assessment capacities, with the view to delivering and reporting quality assured data and undertake reliable related assessments.

In this regard, the Secretariat has undertaken preliminary work streamlined through the organization of the full set of CORMONs Meeting in 2024, where the elements for updating EOs and the corresponding CIs are addressed.

The first proposal and elements for updating the outline of IMAP are presented under the presented document, submitted to the 11th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group, for consultation, review and further guidance.

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1. Introduction

1. The Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) adopted in 2016 (Decision IG.22/7 – COP19) describes the strategy, themes, and products that the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention are aiming to deliver, through collaborative efforts, over the second cycle (2016 – 2021) of the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Process, and the undergoing third cycle, in order to assess the status of the Mediterranean sea and coast, as a basis for further and/or strengthened measures.

2. A more elaborated draft version of the proposed, revised IMAP Decision is provided under UNEP/MED WG.595/Inf.4, whereas the present document mainly summarizes the proposed, revised outline for IMAP.

2. Key Elements of IMAP

3. The key elements which IMAP addresses in line with Decision IG.22/7 of COP19 are the Common Indicators, monitoring and assessment methodologies for all IMAP clusters (i.e., Biodiversity and Non-Indigenous Species, Pollution and Marine Litter, Coast and Hydrography), as well as assessment criteria. On the other hand, the operation objective, indicators, GES definitions and targets are part of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap implementation.

4. The present proposal for IMAP revision follows the same structure with some innovative elements and recommendations deriving from the gained experience from IMAP implementation, the CORMON meetings, the Mediterranean Quality Status Reports preparations, and as appropriate with the European Union – Marine Strategy Framework Directive (EU-MDFS).

5. The working document UNEP/MED WG.595/Inf.4 (Revised Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria), which has been prepared by the Secretariat to support this document and the overall process, provides:

a) The updated reference list of species (marine sea birds, marine sea mammals, marine turtles) and habitats (benthic and pelagic habitats), as well as the corresponding assessment criteria and scales, thresholds and baseline values for biodiversity and non-indigenous species (IMAP CIs 3, 4, 5 and 6) (Annex I of UNEP/MED WG.595/Inf.4);
b) The updated assessment criteria for nutrients (EO5: CIs 13 and 14), contaminants (EO9: CIs 17, 18 and 20) and marine litter (EO10: CIs 22 and 23) (Annex II of UNEP/MED WG.595/Inf.4).

3. Proposal for a Revised Outline of IMAP

6. The following revised outline of Ecological Objectives (EOs) and Common Indicators (CIs) is proposed for review and consideration:

Biodiversity (EO1):	'Biological diversity is maintained or enhanced. The quality and occurrence of coastal and marine habitats and the distribution and abundance of coastal and marine species are in line with prevailing physiographic, hydrographic, geographic and climatic conditions.'
Common Indicator 1:	Habitat distributional range to also consider habitat extent as a relevant attribute.
Common Indicator 2:	Condition of the habitat's typical species and communities.
Common Indicator 3:	Species distributional range (marine mammals, seabirds, marine reptiles).
Common Indicator 4:	Population abundance of selected species (marine mammals, seabirds, marine reptiles).
Common indicator 5:	Population demographic characteristics (e.g. body size or age class structure, sex ratio, fecundity rates, survival/mortality rates related to marine mammals, seabirds, marine reptiles).

Non-Indigenous Species (EO2): 'Non-indigenous species introduced by human activities are at levels that do not adversely alter the ecosystem.'

Common Indicator 6: Trends in abundance, temporal occurrence, and spatial distribution of non-indigenous species, particularly invasive, non-indigenous species, notably in risk areas (EO2, in relation to the main vectors and pathways of spreading of such species, as appropriate).

Fisheries (EO3)[1]: 'Populations of selected commercially exploited fish and shellfish are within biologically safe limits, exhibiting a population age and size distribution that is indicative of a healthy stock.'

Common Indicator 7: Spawning stock Biomass.

Common Indicator 8: Total landings.

Common Indicator 9: Fishing Mortality.

Common Indicator 10: Fishing effort.

Common Indicator 11: Catch per unit of effort (CPUE) or Landing per unit of effort (LPUE) as a proxy.

Common Indicator 12: Bycatch of vulnerable and non-target species[2].

Marine Food Webs (EO4): 'Alterations to components of marine food webs caused by resource extraction or human-induced environmental changes do not have long-term adverse effects on food web dynamics and related viability.'

** Common and/or Candidate Indicators are in the process of development in collaboration with GFCM.*

Eutrophication (EO5): 'Human-induced eutrophication is prevented, especially adverse effects thereof, such as losses in biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, harmful algal blooms and oxygen deficiency in bottom waters.'

Common Indicator 13: Concentration of key nutrients in water column.

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

Sea-floor Integrity (EO6): 'Sea-floor integrity is maintained, especially in priority benthic habitats.'

** Common and/or Candidate Indicators are in the process of development*

Hydrography (EO7): 'Alteration of hydrographic conditions does not adversely affect coastal and marine ecosystems.'

Common Indicator 15: Location and extent of the habitats **potentially** impacted ~~directly~~ by hydrographic alterations.

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[2] Considered for both EO1 and EO3.

Coastal Ecosystems and Landscapes (EO8):	'The natural dynamics of coastal areas are maintained and coastal ecosystems and landscapes are preserved.'
Common Indicator 16:	Length of coastline subject to physical disturbance due to the influence of **hu**man-made structures (EO8).
Candidate Common Indicator 25:	Land ~~use~~ **cover** change (EO8).

Contaminants (EO9):	'Contaminants cause no significant impact on coastal and marine ecosystems and human health.'
Common Indicator 17:	Concentration of key harmful contaminants measured in the relevant matrix (EO9, related to biota, sediment, seawater).
Common Indicator 18:	Level of pollution effects of key contaminants where a cause-and-effect relationship has been established (EO9).
Common Indicator 19:	Occurrence, origin (where possible), extent of acute pollution events (e.g. slicks from oil, oil products and hazardous substances), and their impact on biota affected by this pollution (EO9).
Common Indicator 20:	Actual levels of contaminants that have been detected and number of contaminants which have exceeded maximum regulatory levels in commonly consumed seafood (EO9).
Common Indicator 21:	Percentage of intestinal enterococci concentration measurements within established standards (EO9).

Marine Litter (EO10):	'Marine and coastal litter do not adversely affect coastal and marine environment.'
Common Indicator 22:	Trends in the amount of litter washed ashore and/or deposited on coastlines (EO10).
Common Indicator 23:	Trends in the amount of litter in the water column including microplastics and on the seafloor (EO10).
Common Indicator 23 (bis):	**Trends in the amount of litter coming from riverine sources (EO10).**
~~Candidate~~ **Common** Indicator 24:	Trends in the amount of litter ingested by or entangling marine organisms focusing on selected mammals, marine birds, and marine turtles (EO10).

Energy including Underwater Noise (EO11):	'Noise from human activities cause no significant impact on marine and coastal ecosystems.'
Candidate Indicator 26:	Proportion of days and geographical distribution where loud, low, and mid-frequency impulsive sounds exceed levels that are likely to entail significant impact on marine animals.
Candidate Indicator 27:	Levels of continuous low frequency sounds with the use of models as appropriate.