UNITED NATIONS

EP

UNEP/MED WG.620/Inf.25

UN environment programme

Mediterranean Action Plan
Barcelona Convention

5 September 2025
Original: English

Meeting of the MAP Focal Points

Athens, Greece, 16-19 September 2025

Agenda Item 6: Preparation of the 24th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP24)

Draft contribution of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development to the COP24 Ministerial Declaration

For environmental and cost-saving 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

Inputs of the MCSD to theme of the COP24

'Sustainable Blue Economy for a resilient and healthy Mediterranean'

Introduction

1. The 21st Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) (Corinth, Greece, 24-26 June 2025), agreed to delegate to the MCSD Steering Committee (MCSD SC) the elaboration of key messages to convey the **ambitions and vision of the MCSD on Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean Region, specifically in relation to the theme of the COP24 *'Sustainable Blue Economy for a resilient and healthy Mediterranean'*.** These inputs are to be considered for the preparation of both the Ministerial High-Level Session as well as for the Ministerial Declaration of the 24th Meeting of the Contracting Parties and its Protocols (Cairo, Egypt, 2-5 December 2025) (COP24);

2. The Meeting acknowledged that 2025 marks an important milestone year both at the global as well as at the regional Mediterranean level for the protection, **conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources which are the key components of the blue economy**;

3. As COP24 will be hosted in Cairo, Egypt, the region is provided with a unique opportunity to showcase national and regional commitments, including Egypt's National Climate Change Strategy 2050 and the National Circular Economy Strategy, as key frameworks supporting the transition towards a sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean;

4. **At global level,** 2025 coincided 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 conservation and sustainable use of the Ocean and its resources, and the achievement of SDG 14, also by **mobilizing funding and promoting sustainable ocean-based economy;**

5. The theme of the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly **(UNEA-7,** 8-12 December 2025**) "*Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet*"** promotes sustainable solutions for a safer and more resilient planet **to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;**

6. **At regional level,** 2025 marked the 50 years anniversary of UNEP/MAP and the 30 years of the Post Rio Barcelona Convention, that culminated with the **Mediterranean Day at UNOC-3 on 10 June 2025 and the adoption of the Declaration of the Ministers of the Mediterranean** that has renewed the commitment for a sustainable Mediterranean, including on **promoting the transition to a sustainable blue economy;**

7. The **EU Ocean Pact,** launched during the UNOC-3 and with a budget of around €1 billion, aims at setting a coordinated plan for managing the ocean, **including by supporting the competitiveness of sustainable blue economy,** while the **upcoming New Pact for the Mediterranean**, renews and elevates the EU's ambition to engage more deeply with countries across the Mediterranean region **on issues of common interest, as the blue economy is;**

8. In complement:

   - COP23 (Portoroz, Slovenia, 5-8 December 2023) endorsed the **Decision IG.26/10 on the Conceptual Framework for Implementing Marine Spatial Planning (MSP),** which acknowledges that MSP is a **necessary tool for sustainable Blue Economy.**
   - The **2024 UN Pact for the Future, under Action 10,** decides to take ambitious action to improve the **health, productivity, sustainable use and resilience of the ocean and its ecosystems.**

- The **High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2025** (14-23 July 2025), **specifically under SDG 14 as SDG under in depth-review,** highlighted the importance of **transitioning to a sustainable blue economy**, among the others.

Rationale

9. Based on the global and regional frameworks presented in the introduction, as well as on the:

- conclusions and recommendations of the 21st Meeting of the MCSD, and
- main relevant elements steaming from the Mediterranean Strategy for Stainable Development 2026-2035 (MSSD 2026-2035) relevant to sustainable blue economy, including the flagship initiatives

this document presents the main elements to be taken into account to draft messages as input of the MCSD to the Ministerial High-Level Session and the Ministerial Declaration of the *COP24 theme on 'Sustainable Blue Economy for a resilient and healthy Mediterranean';*

10. This document equally aims at **raising the attention on and promoting at higher level** the integrated approach the MSSD 2026-2035 ensures on sustainable blue economy as key economic sector of the Mediterranean that has the potentiality to play a key role in **promoting solutions for an accelerated transition** towards a resilient and healthy Mediterranean;

11. The proposed plan to prepare the inputs of the MCSD for the Ministerial High-Level Session and the Ministerial Declaration of the COP24 is the following:

By 3rd week of August	Draft inputs prepared by the MCSD SC with the support of the Secretariat, shared with the MCSD for comments/validation
By 4th week of August	Draft inputs submitted to the **MAP Focal Points Meeting as information document**
By end September	Online meeting of the MCSD SC to discuss the inputs of the MCSD following the MAP Focal Points Meeting
By 3rd week October	Inputs of the MCSD finalised by the MCSD SC with the support of the Secretariat and validated by the MCSD
By 2 November	Inputs of the MCSD submitted to **COP24 as information document**
Since the MAP FPs Meeting	Support during the negotiation of the draft COP 24 Ministerial declaration to consider MCSD inputs

Main elements for consideration

12. The MSSD 2026-2035 is inspired by the **high-level momentum to boost sustainable development in the Mediterranean** and raises the level of ambition to accelerate progress toward achieving the SDGs. It does so, **by embedding and reinforcing actions and flagship initiatives** (listed in Annex I) related to climate change as a cross cutting priority, enhanced management of marine and coastal areas *inter alia* through Marine Spatial Planning, energy transition and deployment of renewable energies, application of nature-based solutions, reduction of waste generation, promotion of the WEFE nexus approach and sustainable management of water and forests, as well as the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right, improvement of air quality, **green transition and adoption of circular business models of key economic, sectors as blue economy**, sustainable finance, improved environmental and institutional governance, enhanced role of local authorities as key

implementers, engagement with civil society, including youth and women as well as private sector involvement.

13. In this respect the MSSD 2026-2035 has the **great potential to become a leading Strategic Reference Framework on sustainable development** in the Mediterranean region. To this aim, the Contracting Parties, MCSD Members, major global and regional partners and actors should further promote it within the relevant regional and global events, fora as well as donors, inspiring concrete targeted and coordinated action and acknowledging its positive impact for advancing the sustainable development agenda in the region, in particular in the Mediterranean sea and its coastal areas;

14. The six MSSD Objectives remain valid, with a clear indication to address climate change as a top priority for the Mediterranean basin to be urgently addressed:

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

15. **Sustainable Blue Economy,** which includes some of the most dynamic economic sectors in the Mediterranean region (Fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, coastal and maritime tourism, offshore renewable energy, blue biotechnology, water desalinization, and ports and maritime transport), and with more and more promising perspectives in terms of income, job opportunities, new skill and reskill opportunities, shall **play a pivotal role in promoting solutions and an accelerated transition towards a resilient and healthy Mediterranean**;

16. **Circular approaches** offer transformative patterns and **new sustainable business models for blue economy**, by supporting *inter alia* **marine plastic pollution reduction and prevention**, and by prioritizing continual reduction, reuse, refurbishment, and recycling of products and materials, while emphasizing the responsible use of natural resources, in particular water, minimizing waste, and fostering conservation and restoration;

17. **Marine Spatial Planning (MSP**), a key tool to promote the governance of a sustainable **multi-use of the marine and coastal space**, is essential to reconcile environmental conservation and the application of the ecosystem-based approach with economic development and social considerations. To this end the implementation of MSP is fundamental to support the progress of **blue economy towards decarbonization**, while supporting sustainable management of **Marine and Coastal Protected Areas in the Mediterranean;**

18. A growing recognition of the potential of the combined WEFE Nexus and Source to Sea **management approach**, enabling better integration of sectoral policies as well as a more effective management of natural resources and socio-economic activities, **including blue economy,** may offer clear opportunities for enhanced targeted efficient actions towards sustainability in these very important sectors for the Mediterranean region;

19. Using in the optimal way the potential of sustainable **blue economy to provide a range of solutions for both climate change mitigation and adaptation,** many of which are nature-based solutions, could support protecting and restoring coastal ecosystems like seagrasses and their capacity to

absorb and store carbon; accordingly prioritizing and investing in nature-based solutions is key for building coastal resilience, protecting biodiversity, and achieving climate goals in the region.

20. The **role of sub-national and local authorities** should be **reinforced** to further enhance their **capacities to embed blue economy into local sustainable development strategies and activities,** while developing the appropriate linkages with environmental protection, climate change, public and private finance and stakeholders' engagement. **The blue economy is in fact also a major driver of urban development**, promoting the role of cities as **blue economy hubs**, green job opportunities and promotion of **related direct and indirect value chains**

21. **Stakeholders' involvement** has been a clear added value and asset of MCSD and MSSD since its early stage of development and implementation. The MSSD 2026-2035 appeals now for a stronger and more streamlined role of **all stakeholders, civil society, youth and women, local authorities, National and Regional Parliaments, private sector and scientific community** and for a reinforced implementation to ensure that the region is put back on track towards sustainability, stability and SDG delivery by people for people and nature;

22. In particular, with regards to **Women**, apart from their key role in managing resources at family, household and local community level**,** they play a crucial role in achieving sustainable development due to their **knowledge and active involvement in various blue economy sectors**, such as fisheries, bioeconomy, biotechnology, sustainable coastal tourism. Their active participation in decision-making, economic activities, and community initiatives is essential in contributing to and implementing sustainable and circular practices and measures;

23. **Youth** represent the 'ambassadors' for the **promotion of sustainable practices in blue economy sectors,** as for example on coastal and marine tourism, renewable energy/off-shore wind and fisheries, thanks to their innovative ideas, enthusiasm, and ability to drive change. They can act as agents of change by advocating for sustainable policies but also by engaging in community initiatives, and promoting eco-friendly practices in their daily lives;

24. **Sustainable finance** and related public and private economic policies and tools are indispensable cross cutting prerequisites and enablers of **sustainable activities, including those of blue economy sectors,** supporting the necessary transition of the region towards resilient, inclusive, and environmentally healthy development paths, inspired by the Strategic Directions of the MSSD. The approach seeks to mobilize financial resources, both public and private, to de-risk and scale up sustainable investments, while progressively aligning financial flows with environmental, social, and governance principles, therefore ensuring long-term impact. The approach also includes speeding up the **phasing out of the environmental harmful subsidies (EHS)** in key sectors, such as fisheries, while engaging with the relevant public and private stakeholders to foster integrated sustainable finance and policies of blue economy sectors;

25. Technology transfer and capacity building are critical enablers for the sustainable blue economy transition. Enhancing access to innovative technologies, best practices, and knowledge-sharing platforms, particularly for developing Mediterranean countries, is essential for levelling the playing field and ensuring an inclusive and equitable transition;

26. Finally it is important to acknowledge the **role of MAP and the Barcelona Convention system and of several strategic and policy commitments** made by the Contracting Parties and MAP Partners that are encouraged to maximize their efforts in contributing to the effective MSSD implementation and SDG delivery, outreach and partnerships enhancement.

ANNEX I

MSSD 2026-2035 flagship initiatives

MSSD Objective	Flagship Initiative
Objective 1 **Address climate change with emphasis on adaptation to its impacts and promote Energy Security and Transition as a priority**	Regional science-policy interface mechanism to prepare consolidated regional scientific assessments on climate change trends, impacts and adaptation and mitigation options (**MedEcc**)
	Launching of educational initiatives (e.g. Mediterranean ESD Network: Platform for collaboration among schools, universities, and civil society Mediterranean Green Skills Program: Training for youth and women in sustainable business practices)
	Delivering 1TW of renewable energy capacity in the Mediterranean by 2030 (**TERAMED**)
Objective 2 **Improve the health, productivity, restoration and resilience of the marine and coastal ecosystems**	**Achieving 30 by 30 MPAs/ OECMs Targets** (Update of MEDFUND Flagship Initiative)
	Mediterranean Coast Day
	Promote the **IUCN Green list** standard in riparian states to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of parks managing bodies created (**IUCN Green list)**
	Promote the protection and conservation of **Seagrass/Posidonia Meadows** as crucial ecosystem (**Seagrass/Posidonia Meadows)**
Objective 3 **Promote sustainable resource management, especially water, food security and systems through sustainable forms of rural development**	Strategy for the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus (WEFE Nexus) in the Mediterranean Source to Sea continuum (**WEFE NEXUS**)
	Mediterranean Forest Initiative
Objective 4 **Plan-and manage sustainable, resilient Mediterranean cities**	**Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award**
	Mediterranean **Network of Zero Net Cities**
	Sustainable **urban toolbox** for the Mediterranean (**MedUrbanTools)**

MSSD Objective	Flagship Initiative
Objective 5 **Accelerate transition towards sustainable, green, blue and circular economy and sustainable finance**	Create and promote a Mediterranean business award for environmental innovation **(WeMedBusiness Award)**
	Sustainable blue tourism
Objective 6 **Improve governance at all levels, cooperation and partnerships in support of resilience and sustainable development.**	Encourage the adoption and implementation of the **Aarhus Convention** **Women leadership** for SDGs in the Mediterranean
	Youth involvement in MSSD decision process and implementation
	Mediterranean Green Week
	Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development
	Observatory on Environment and Sustainable Development