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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN**

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18th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee

Athens, Greece, 18-19 January 2017

Report of the Meeting

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UN Environment/MAP
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Introduction

1. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), the 18th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee was held on 18-19 January 2017 in Athens, Greece, in the premises of the Coordinating Unit of United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (hereinafter referred to as MAP). The meeting was chaired by Mr. Rachid Firadi, President of the MCSD Steering Committee, and attended by all the members of the MCSD Steering Committee, the Secretariat and a representative of Plan Bleu/RAC. The List of Participants is provided in Annex I of this Report.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting

2. The meeting was opened at 09:30 on 18 January 2017 by Mr. Rachid Firadi, President of the MCSD Steering Committee.

3. Mr. Firadi, welcomed the MCSD Steering Committee members and gave the floor to the MAP Coordinator who welcomed the participants and highlighted the challenges of experiencing a very busy year in this short biennium. He also took the opportunity to introduce the newly appointed MAP staff and the Plan Bleu/RAC representative.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work

4. Following the presentation of the Provisional Agenda by the Secretariat, the MCSD Steering Committee reviewed and adopted the Provisional Agenda as contained in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.428/1, attached as Annex II to this Report. No additional issues were added to agenda item 6 "Any Other Matters".

Agenda item 3: Work plan of the MCSD Steering Committee and report on work carried out

5. The Secretariat presented the progress in MCSD and MSSD 2016-2025 related developments since the 16th Meeting of the MCSD and 17th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Marrakesh, Morocco, June 2015), as contained in the "Progress Report" (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.428/3).

6. In this respect, the Coordinator referred to recent and upcoming events of global dimension on oceans and marine issues as great opportunities in terms of visibility and to promote the work of the MAP-Barcelona Convention and of the MCSD as well as the MSSD 2016-2025. He also highlighted the importance of the regional dimension and of showcasing the Mediterranean region as an example for environmental governance. He highlighted as upcoming opportunities, the 2017 "Our Ocean" Conference to be held in Malta, the fact that the latter will also hold the EU Presidency in the first semester of 2017, the G7 Italian Presidency focus on the Mediterranean marine environment, the process under the UN on Biodiversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), the high-level Conference organized by France in February 2017 on "Mediterranean Plan for blue growth", the High-Level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14, the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-3), with this sequence of events being concluded by COP 20 of the Barcelona Convention at the end of 2017. He also updated meeting participants on project approvals and on the positive trend on the status of ratifications, noted the important work undertaken by several MCSD members and stressed that during the next biennium there will be an increased effort to strengthen partnerships.

7. The introduction by the Coordinator triggered further discussion on the links with the High-Level Political Forum to take place in New York in July 2017, as a meeting of relevance to the work of the MCSD, and with the process for the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development. Other processes highlighted by participants included the work on oceans involving NGOs from different regional seas and the preparation of the Regional

Framework on Integrated Coastal Zone Management and the Conceptual Framework on Marine Spatial Planning to be adopted at COP 20. Furthermore, several participants stressed the importance of the work of the MCSD and of MSSD 2016-2025 for the national level and especially for the preparation of National Strategies on Sustainable Development, for involving other Ministries, apart from those responsible for environmental issues, and for breaking “silos” between different policy sectors. It was also noted that there are different structures and a different clustering to deal with sustainable development at the national level and that the MCSD can play a role in facilitating an osmosis between different policies related to sustainable development.

8. Regarding the structure of the Progress Report, one member of the Steering Committee noted that more visibility should be given on the MSSD 2016-2025 implementation to reflect work on the key MSSD deliverables related to flagship initiatives and targets, and that this should be more clearly reflected in the report’s structure.

9. The Secretariat then presented the “Work Plan for the MCSD Steering Committee and MSSD 2016-2025 Implementation” (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.428/4).

10. The members of the MCSD Steering Committee discussed and reviewed the “Work Plan for the MCSD Steering Committee and MSSD 2016-2025 Implementation”. They expressed their satisfaction for the core work and highlighted that more visibility is needed on the sustainable development related work of MAP. One member of the Steering Committee suggested that the work plan could be provided in a more tabular format and that more information is needed on the process for the development and adoption of the MSSD 2016-2025 indicators. Some participants also mentioned that they would be happy to contribute more to the relevant processes.

11. The MAP Coordinator thanked the participants and stressed that the work of the MCSD and the MSSD 2016-2025 should be also promoted by the MCSD members, for example through their websites, especially as the Strategy belongs to all Mediterranean stakeholders.

12. The President of the MCSD Steering Committee stressed that the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism will help promoting sustainable development at the national level and developing or adapting National Strategies for Sustainable Development.

13. The Secretariat updated the meeting participants on the forthcoming MAP and Components Focal Points Meetings and presented on screen a draft of the updated tentative calendar. MCSD members informed the Secretariat of relevant meetings to be included in the calendar.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- **The Steering Committee expressed support for the work done as presented by the Secretariat and recommended to:**
- **Further strengthen links between the work of the MCSD and the Implementation of MSSD 2016-2025 with international and regional processes and to showcase the positive input of the work of MAP and MCSD to such processes, e.g. HLPF.**
- **Provide greater visibility/easier access of MSSD 2016-2025 in the websites of MAP and Components.**
- **Have a more clear structure of future progress reports, especially in relation to MSSD 2016-2025 implementation.**
- **Have future work plans of the MCSD Steering Committee presented in a more tabular format (e.g. by month).**

Agenda item 4: Progress and next steps for MSSD 2016-2025 implementation

14. The MCSD Steering Committee was informed about the “Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD 2016-2025) Implementation and Monitoring Plan”, contained in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.428/5.

15. In this respect, detailed presentations were made of the progress regarding (a) the development of the Mediterranean Sustainable Development Dashboard and (b) the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) of National Strategies for Sustainable Development.

16. Following the presentation of the representative of Plan Bleu/RAC on the indicators and his explanations regarding the fact sheets under preparation (in English and French) participants discussed the way forward and decided on the roadmap until COP 20. The members of the Steering Committee suggested that some indicators were complicated and that first there should be a decision on the list of indicators before populating them with data, and publishing them online. In order to facilitate a deeper understanding of the proposed indicators, the Secretariat suggested each indicator to be accompanied with a definition and with concise information on how it will be used as well as on possible links with other sets of indicators (related to, e.g., SDGs, Regional Seas, Ecosystem Approach, Sustainable Consumption and Production). The members of the Steering Committee agreed with this proposal, while members of the Committee who are country representatives noted that duplication of work and extra unnecessary reporting burden to countries should be avoided by using existing datasets and that they need to consult in-country especially with their national office responsible for statistics. The meeting also agreed on the need to reduce the number of indicators (from the 48 indicators currently proposed) to the extent possible. It was also noted that the indicators needed to be reviewed by the MCSD Steering Committee and to this end they would be circulated for comments during February. The governance process related to the indicators was also clarified, such that the list of indicators would be endorsed by the upcoming 17th MCSD meeting prior of submission to the COP for approval.

17. Plan Bleu/RAC then introduced the SIMPEER process and methodology. During the discussion that followed, participants welcomed the peer-review process and congratulated the Secretariat and especially it's Plan Bleu/RAC for the work done. They suggested that the process should be continued in the future with the involvement of more Contracting Parties. They also suggested that the exchange of best practices and of national experiences should focus on the national processes and structures for achieving sustainable development that exist in different countries. They also noted that this process could be more closely linked to the preparation process of countries for the Voluntary National Reviews under the High-Level Political Forum (in which 5 Mediterranean countries participated in 2016 and 4 more will participate in 2017). On the process, the members of the Steering Committee noted that it is not as simple as its title suggests but rather intensive and that efforts should be made to focus more on assisting reviewed/participating countries in addressing the actual challenges of sustainable development, e.g. how to achieve policy coherence in practice, in order for the process to have an added value and to have it further simplified - possibly by reducing or omitting some of the steps involved - so that it can be more easily understood and implemented. One participant noted that his organization will try to prepare a short note on how this can be achieved.

18. The Secretariat noted that the issue of integration is extremely important and that countries participating in the pilot phase of the SIMPEER process will give extremely valuable feedback when sharing their experiences on implementation of sustainable development at the national level. Reference was also made to the fact that the Mediterranean region is a pioneer in implementing the Agenda 2030 at the regional level, and that this added value should be presented at the global level and be made more visible.

19. The Secretariat presented the “MSSD 2016-2025 implementation and monitoring plan” and asked the MCSD Steering Committee members for their advice, feedback and suggestions in order to proceed to a more detailed work plan, which would include the, indicative, necessary resources for its implementation. The members of the MCSD Steering Committee provided their advice on the next

steps, agreeing that a more detailed version of the work plan is needed. One member of the Steering Committee stressed the importance of the flagship initiatives, proposing the preparation of a one-page factsheet for each flagship initiative with information on timeline, actors/responsibilities and indicative budget, and this was agreed. Another member of the Steering Committee stressed the importance of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD), especially after the adoption of the Action Plan of the MSESD in Cyprus on December 2016, noting that it should be seen as an additional flagship initiative for the implementation of the MSSD 2016-2025. With respect to paragraph 33 of the Work Plan, another member of the Steering Committee noted that that any items to be raised in the draft decision on the MSSD 2016-2025 implementation and monitoring for submission to COP 20, should have featured in the MSSD 2016-2025, further suggesting that guidelines on sustainable tourism might best be handled under the SCP Action Plan, where it is highlighted as one of the four priority areas for consumption and production in the Mediterranean.

20. The MAP Coordinator stressed that the implementation of the MSSD 2016-2025 is a collective process involving all relevant actors in the Mediterranean, especially the members of the MCSD, while he also stressed the importance of transposing implementation from the regional to the national level.

21. The members of the MCSD Steering Committee discussed the possible main actors for each flagship initiative, noting that a presentation of the state of play for each initiative should be provided at the next MCSD meeting. Finally, they briefly reported on their own efforts and plans to disseminate the MSSD 2016-2025 and support its implementation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

A. MEDITERRANEAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DASHBOARD

- **Process for the further development of Mediterranean Sustainable Development Dashboard:**
 - a) **End of January: List of 48 proposed indicators (listed per objective, and accompanied by a short text containing description, relation with other/existing sets of indicators and brief information how they will be used) prepared by the Secretariat (Plan Bleu/RAC)**
 - b) **Mid-February: Comments by MCSD Steering Committee members on the list of indicators**
 - c) **End-February/beginning of March: comments consolidated by the Secretariat and sent to the MCSD Steering Committee Members (with reduced number of indicators)**
 - d) **(possible) early/mid-March: Meeting of the Steering Committee by teleconference to discuss and decide on consolidated version (else by exchanges through email)**
 - e) **End of April: Plan Bleu/RAC National Focal Points meeting to discuss/fine-tune technically the list provided after d) above**
 - f) **June/July: MCSD to discuss and possibly endorse list of indicators**
 - g) **September: MAP National Focal Points meeting to discuss possible decision on MSSD 2016-2025 Implementation/Dashboard**
 - h) **December: Discussion and possible Decision of COP 20**
- **Possible criteria for selection of the reduced number of indicators:**
 - a) **Availability of data (possibly through existing reporting channels)**
 - b) **Relevance to MSSD 2016-2025 (esp. regarding targets and flagship initiatives)**
 - c) **Communicable, understandable, interpretable**
- **Indicators that are “dropped” based on such criteria may remain in a list of candidate indicators.**

B. SIMPEER PEER REVIEW MECHANISM (SIMPEER) OF NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- **SIMPEER process to have a follow up, based on the experience of the pilot phase.**
- **Emphasis to be given on national structures for achieving sustainable development to enhance sharing of lessons learnt and not on the MSSD 2016-2025 implementation.**
- **Efforts should be made to further simplify the SIMPEER process.**
- **Links to be established between the SIMPEER and the Voluntary National Reviews under the HLPF showcasing the assets of peer-to-peer processes.**

C. MSSD 2016-2025 IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING PLAN

- **Secretariat to further work and elaborate on the implementation and monitoring plan, based on comments received by the MCSD Steering Committee.**
- **Secretariat to prepare a short table/burden sharing for each flagship initiative, with calendar / responsible actors / budget. Actors are to include mainly Steering Committee members, but also MCSD members, etc.**

Agenda item 5: Preparations for the 17th MCSD meeting and MCSD input into COP 20

22. The MCSD Steering Committee was invited to discuss and decide upon the date, venue and agenda of 17th Meeting of the MCSD. It was suggested to hold the MCSD meeting at the beginning of July, and the Secretariat was asked to identify possible dates, preferably at the first week of July. Regarding the venue of the MCSD meeting, the Secretariat informed that there were preliminary discussions with France, but that final confirmation was still pending due to the preparations for the upcoming elections in the country.

23. The MCSD Steering Committee was also invited to discuss the structure of the 17th Meeting of the MCSD, the main agenda and the expected outcomes of the meeting. The discussion was based on the possible elements for the Agenda of the 17th Meeting of the MCSD proposed in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.428/4 and on a presentation made by the Secretariat. Furthermore, the MCSD Steering Committee discussed the possible inputs of the MCSD to the 20th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP20) in December 2017. In this respect, it was noted that the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols *“suggested to focus COP20 on the implementation of the SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”, addressing in particular land-sea interaction, including ICZM, marine biodiversity, marine litter/plastics, in relation to specific sectors such as tourism”*.

24. The MAP Coordinator asked for the support of the MCSD Steering Committee members in identifying and securing high-level speakers for the MCSD meeting. He also noted that, according to the Terms of Reference and the Rules of Procedure of the MCSD (Decision IG.22/17), the MCSD meeting is also to produce opinions on the overall MAP Work Programme, with the aim of integrating sustainability considerations into the MAP / Barcelona Convention system as a whole.

25. The participants discussed the possible agenda items and structure of the 17th Meeting of the MCSD, taking into consideration the COP 20 suggested theme and the presentation by the Secretariat, and decided as presented in the conclusions and recommendations below.

Conclusions and recommendations

- **MCSD dates: it was proposed to hold the meeting in early July (possible dates 4-6 July 2017)**
- **MCSD venue: (tbc) - France (Marseille or Nice)**
- **MCSD meeting structure, based on three sections:**

1. *General section*

(e.g. update on activities/events, how the MCSD work fits with regional/international processes, PoW 2018-2019 of MAP).

2. *MSSD 2016-2025 implementation - Good practices and obstacles faced*

(e.g. monitoring and implementation plan, SIMPEER, Dashboard, Flagship Initiatives, national experiences/structures and links to implementation of SDGs)

3. *Contribution to COP 20*

(The MCSD could focus discussions based on the Bureau's suggestion for the COP 20 theme. Possibility to examine a wider scope/theme for COP 20 that addresses implementation of SDG14, from a wider perspective looking in particular at issues such as pollution, SCP or ICZM/MSP. The exact theme of the MCSD can be fine-tuned inspired by the SDG 14 event in New York, June 2017)

- The MCSD Steering Committee members to work with the Secretariat in mobilizing high-level speakers.
- Parallel sessions can be considered for the second section (MSSD 2016-2025 implementation - Good practices and obstacles faced)

Agenda item 6: Any Other Matters

26. No other matters were raised by the members of the MCSD Steering Committee.

Agenda item 7: Closure of the Meeting

27. The Secretariat submitted for adoption a set of conclusions and recommendations on the basis of the discussions on the different items of the agenda.

28. The MCSD Steering Committee adopted the set of conclusions and recommendations as set in this report.

29. The meeting was closed by the President of the MCSD Steering Committee at 17:00 on Thursday, 19 January 2017.

Annex I

List of participants

List of Participants
Liste des Participants

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Annex II
Agenda

Agenda

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Agenda item 2	Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and Organization of Work
Agenda item 3	Work plan of the MCSD Steering Committee and report on work carried out
Agenda item 4	Progress and next steps for MSSD implementation
Agenda item 5	Preparations for the 17 th MCSD meeting and MCSD input into COP 20
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