

Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP Project
“416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework
Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of
the Caspian Sea and SMA ID 3A82”
(Administered under PIMS 00270)
(2015 - 2023)





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Project Title: “(Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea” and SMA ID 3A82.

Project number: 416.3

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The evaluation consultant(s) hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to the successful finalisation of the current project, formulation of any next phases and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

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About the Evaluation

Joint Evaluation: No

Report Language(s): English

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ABSTRACT:

This report is a Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP project: "416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea and SMA ID 3A82/PIMS 00270, implemented between 2015 and 2023. The project's overall objective was to provide the services ad interim of the Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea. It was managed by the UNEP's Regional office of Europe (ROE) in Geneva.

The evaluation sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine the sustainability of its results.

With an overall performance rating of Moderately Satisfactory, the 4th point on a six-point scale, the main findings include:

- i) The participation of the Interim secretary was necessary in order to facilitate a conversation between the five littoral states of the Caspian Sea. Despite political difficulties due to differing national interests and geopolitical tensions, progress was made through perseverance and effective management.
- ii) The project has demonstrated strong performance in the areas of Strategic Relevance and Financial Management with a Satisfactory performance; subsequently Quality of Project Design, Effectiveness, Monitoring and Reporting with a Moderately Satisfactory and Sustainability with a Moderately Likely.
- iii) Areas that would have benefited from further attention are Efficiency, and Factors affecting performance and cross-cutting issues. These categories displayed a Moderately Unsatisfactory performance. The project must pay attention to mitigating external risks. It was evident that criterion "Nature of External Context" received the lowest rating, Unfavourable.

The main recommendations to UNEP are: A Specific Plan should be developed in order to reach a consensus of the location and structure of the Permanent Secretariat in the region. Moreover, Financial Plan should be developed to obtain private financing.

Implementing parties are advised to encourage Protocols' ratification/ implementation/ adoption by the signatory countries; and include in project development Human Rights and Gender Dimensions. Also, feedback channels should be established in order to meet the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalized groups.

Source(s) of Funding by Country:

Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation and Turkmenistan

Source(s) of Funding by Institution Type:

Foundation/NGO No

Private Sector No

UN Body	Yes
Multilateral Fund	No

Key words: Marine Ecosystems, Tehran Convention, Ecosystem Management, Biodiversity Conservation and Marine Sustainability.

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*Evaluation Terms of Reference available, with this report, in wedocs, link

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List of acronyms, abbreviations and technical terms

AF	Adaptation Fund
Aktau Protocol	Protocol Concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Cooperation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents to the Tehran Convention
Aktau Protocol Regional Plan	Caspian Sea Plan Concerning Regional Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution in Cases of Emergency
Ashgabat Protocol	Protocol for the Conservation of Biological Diversity to the Tehran Convention
AZ	Azerbaijan
BP	British Petroleum Consilium / Exploration (Caspian Sea)
BFMS	Budget and Financial Management Service
CaspEco	Short name for full project name: "The Caspian Sea: Restoring Depleted Fisheries and Consolidation of a Permanent Regional Environmental Governance Framework"
BSP	Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building
BRS	Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions
CAREC	Central Asian Regional Environmental Centre
CASPAS	Integrated programme on Hydrometeorology and Monitoring of Environment in the Caspian Sea
CASPCOM	Coordinating Committee on Hydrometeorology of the Caspian Sea
CBD	Convention on Biological Biodiversity
CEIC	Caspian Environment Information Center
CEP	Caspian Environmental Programme
CIC	Caspian Information Center
CIP	Center for International Projects (Russia)
CITES	Convention in International Trade in Endangered Species in Wild Fauna and Flora
CNAP	Caspian National Action Plan
Commission on Aquatic Biological Resources	Commission for the conservation and rational use of aquatic resources and management of shared stocks of such resources of the Caspian Sea
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPC	Caspian Policy Center
CRMLAP	Caspian Regional Marine Litter Action Plan
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CSRRC	Caspian Seal Research and Rehabilitation Center
EA	Expected Accomplishment
EC	European Commission
ECE ESPPO	Economic Commission for Europe
ECOP	Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIA Protocol	Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context to the Tehran Convention
EM	Extraordinary Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention
EMP	Environmental Monitoring Program
EOU	Evaluation Office of UNEP
ESES	Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability

ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESS	Environmental and Social Sustainability
EU / Tacis	European Union / Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent State
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GRID ARENDAL	Global Resource Information Database
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GE	Green Economy
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF SEC	GEF Secretariat
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GPA	Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities
GRID	Global Resource Information Database
HR	Human Resources
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ICCAs	Indigenous and community conserved areas
ID	Identity Document
IKI	International Climate Initiative of the German Ministry for the Environment
IMIS Number	Integrated Management Information System
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IPAs	Indigenous Protected Areas
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IPMR	Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution system(UN)
IR-I	Islamic Republic of Iran
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IVM	Integrated Vector Management
IWC	GEF Biennial International Waters Conference
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
KMG	KazMunaiGaz (National Oil and Gas Company of Kazakhstan)
KZ	Kazakhstan
LBS	Land-based sources of pollution / Protocol to the Tehran Convention
LLC	Local Lead Consultant
MACs	Maximum Allowable Concentrations
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MPPA	Matched Small Grant Programme and Public Participation Coastal Advisor
Monitoring Protocol	Draft Protocol on Monitoring, Assessment and Information Exchange of the Caspian Sea to the Tehran Convention
Moscow Protocol	Protocol for the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities to the Tehran Convention
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSGP	Matched Small Grants programme (World Bank)
MTR	Mid Term Review
MTS	Medium Term Strategy
NBS	Nature-Based Solutions
NFP	National Focal Point
NC	National Coordinator
NCAP	National Caspian Action Plan
NCLO	National Convention Liaison Officer
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

NPCO	National Project Coordination Officer
NPA	National Programme of Action
NPPA	National Public Participation Advisor
NPPS	National Public Participation Strategies
NSCAP	National Strategic Convention Action Plan
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee
OHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner Food Human Rights
OPS	Office of Project Services (UN)
Operational authority under the Aktau Protocol	
Regional Plan	A national organization designated by a State with operational responsibility for dealing with oil pollution incidents in the marine environment
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
OSPRI	Oil Spill Preparedness Regional Initiative for the Caspian Sea, Black Sea and Central Eurasia
PA	Protected Area(s)
PCP	Programme Coordination Project
PCU	Programme Coordination Unit
PDQ	Project Design Quality
PELs	Probable Effect Levels
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIMS	Programme Information Management System
PoW	Programme of Work
PRC	Project Review Committee (internal UNEP committee that approves new projects)
PrepCom	Preparatory Committee Meeting
ProDoc	Project Document
Project CP	Common premises
QA	Quality Assured
RF	Russian Federation
RSO	UNEP Regional Support Office
RTOC	Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception
SAP	Strategic Action Programme
SAPIC	Strategic Action Programme Implementation Coordinator
SC	Sustainable Consumption
SCAP	Strategic Convention Action Programme
SD	Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDCCC	Sustainable Development of Caspiana Coastal Communities
SEIS	Shared Environmental Information System (European Environment Agency)
SESA	Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment
SMA	ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system
SoE	State of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea
SP	Sub-programmes
SPACE	Special Protected Areas of the Caspian Ecosystem
SRIF	Safeguard Risk Identification Form
S-SC	South -South Cooperation
TA	Technical Assistance
TC	Tehran Convention or "Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea"

TCIS	Tehran Convention Interim Secretariat
TCPS	Tehran Convention Permanent Secretariat
TDA	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis
TE	Terminal Evaluation
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TK	Turkmenistan
UEMP	Unified Ecosystem Monitoring Program
UNEA	United Nations Environmental Assembly
UNDA	United Nations Development Account
UNDA	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNEP DELC	United Nations Environmental Programme Division of Environmental Law and Convention
UNEP DEPI	United Nations Environmental Programme Division of Environmental Policy Implementation
UNEP GPA	United Nations Environmental Programme Global Programme of Action
UNEP ROE	United Nations Environmental Programme Regional Office of Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIDSR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks
WB	World Bank
WG	Working Group
WGMA	Working Group on (Environmental) Monitoring and Assessment
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
XB	Extra-budgetary

Project identification table

Table 1: Project Identification Table

UNEP PIMS ID/SMA ¹ ID:	00270	Grant ID ² (if applicable):	
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	UNEP Regional Support Office (RSO)		
Implementing Partners:	N/A		
Sources of Funding:	Country ³ (ies): Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, and Turkmenistan.	Institution ⁴ Name/Type:	
Relevant SDG(s):	SDG 14: Life Below Water 14.2.1 Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to managing marine areas		
MTS (all that apply):	MTS 2010-2013, MTS 2014-2017, MTS 2018-2021, and MTS 2022-2025	UNEP approval date:	September 2008
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved from 2022): OR POW Output(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022)	POW Direct Outcome(s): 1.1 Policymaking and decision-making for climate action are informed by the latest science-based analysis and data generation. 2.1 Collective action by United Nations system entities addresses biodiversity loss and promotes conservation and restoration. 2.3 Productive land and seascapes and fresh water are sustainably managed. 2.8. Sustainable ocean and coastal economy contribute to prosperity and pollution-free development 2.13 Commitments and actions to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems are enhanced. 3.2 Land-based sources of pollution in fresh water and oceans, including marine litter and nutrients, are reduced.		

¹ SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023.

² For example, ID references from EC, IKI, UNDA, Adaptation Fund, GCF.

³ Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.

⁴ Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund; Other.

UNEP PIMS ID/SMA¹ ID:	00270	Grant ID² (if applicable):	
Sub-programme:	Ecosystem Management and Environmental Governance (2010-2011 & 2012-2013) SP4 Environmental Governance	Programme Coordination Project:	N/A
Expected start date:	January 2009	Actual start date:	January 2009
Planned completion date:	December 2011	Actual operational completion date:	December 2023
Planned total project budget⁵ at approval:	\$ 3,060,000	Actual total expenditures reported as of 20/1/25:	\$ 4,830,356
Planned Extra-budgetary Funds⁶:	<i>Cash:</i> \$ 25,000 (UNEP DEPI in cash for 2009) <i>In-kind:</i> \$ 180,000 (UNEP ROE in kind); <i>Cash:</i> USD 5,643,233 (31/12/2023)	Secured Extra-budgetary Funds:	<i>Cash:</i> 0 <i>In-kind:</i> \$ 832,160 <i>Cash:</i> USD 5,213,232 (31/12/2023)
GEF grant allocation:	\$ 1,775,000	Actual Extra-budgetary Funds expenditures reported as of 20/1/25:	<i>Cash:</i> 0 <i>USD 4,720,613 (31/12/2023)</i>
First disbursement:	2009	Planned date of financial closure:	December 2024
No. and dates of formal project revisions:	24	Date of last approved project revision:	17/12/2021
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	N/A (6 meetings of the COP)	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	2022
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation budgeted:	2015	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	2015
Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	April 2014 (1 st)	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	March 2015 (1 st) June 2025 (2nd) ⁷
Coverage – Implementing Country(ies):	Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan	Coverage – Implementing Region(s):	Europe/ Eastern Europe, Caucasus Asia and Pacific/ Central Asia
Dates of previous project phases:	N/A	Status of future project phases:	Trust Fund arrangements

⁵ Total budget may include; Regular Budget, Environment Fund, Extra-Budgetary, including 'softly-earmarked' etc.

⁶ Extra-budgetary funds may include co-finance (cash/in-kind)

⁷ After a Terminal Evaluation was carried out in 2015, the project was extended and became eligible for a second 'Terminal Evaluation' in 2025.

Executive Summary

Project background

1. The objective of the project “416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea and SMA ID 3A82” (Administered under PIMS 00270) was that UNEP provided the services ad interim of the Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea. It was managed by the UNEP’s Regional office of Europe (ROE) in Geneva.
2. According to the most recent formal project revision, the total revised planned budget (in December 2021) was USD 6,440,797 in secured funding from participating countries and supporting project partners. The project was initially designed and implemented for 3 years, from January 2009 to December 2011. However, the project was extended multiple times, finally completing in December 2023.
3. The Evaluation Office of UNEP conducted a Terminal Evaluation (TE) of this project in 2014-2015 (after 6 years), as the project was nearing project completion. That TE report was published in March 2015 and the project was scheduled to end that year. Nonetheless, the Parties requested that the project be extended to allow UNEP to continue to provide Interim Secretariat services until the Parties decided on the arrangement of the Permanent Secretariat and for a trust fund for the administration of the Convention to be established. As a result, there has not been an agreement by the Contracting Parties regarding the Permanent Secretariat yet, and the services of the Interim Secretariat have continued.
4. Since 2015, the project has received several more extensions as requested by the five Contracting Parties of the Tehran Convention. These extensions primarily served to ensure a smooth transition to the new administrative arrangements under the Convention Trust Fund and to secure continuity of ongoing Convention activities. The project was extended until its final completion date of 31 December 2023.
5. The project anticipates, that in the event of a second phase, UNEP/ROE will continue to provide services of the Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea.

This evaluation

6. In line with UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual, the evaluation was undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability.
7. The evaluation considered from 2015 to 2023, to cover the period after the 2015 TE to the end of the project.
8. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned.

9. This evaluation assessed performance against 9 categories. The ratings for each category are assigned using a six-point scale⁸. In addition, this evaluation sought to assess the extent to which the project implemented the recommendations from the 2015 TE.
10. Data collection methods included: interviews and document reviews (including the 2015 TE report). Data analysis was based on applying triangulated data to assess performance against a reconstructed Theory of Change and its causal pathways.
11. The main target audiences for the evaluation findings are UNEP and the littoral countries of the Caspian Sea.

Key findings and performance ratings

12. The project has demonstrated strong performance in the areas of Strategic Relevance and Financial Management with a Satisfactory performance; subsequently Quality of Project Design, Effectiveness, Monitoring and Reporting with a Moderately Satisfactory and Sustainability with a Moderately Likely.
13. Areas that would have benefited from further attention are Efficiency, and Factors affecting performance and cross-cutting issues. These categories displayed a Moderately Unsatisfactory performance.
14. The project must pay attention to mitigating external risks. It was evident that criterion “Nature of External Context” received the lowest rating, Unfavourable, although it is noted that this criterion assesses the operating context and not an element of project performance.
15. The detailed assessment of each evaluation criterion is contained in Chapter 4. **The overall project score for the period 2015-2023 was 4.03, indicating the project rating was Moderately Satisfactory (Table 2).** The result revealed that the performance of the project decreased over the last 9 years when compared to the overall project rating of the first Terminal Evaluation of 2015, which stated the project had a Satisfactory performance.
16. Answers to strategic questions are provided on page 85 of this report.

Table 2: Summary of project ratings

Nº	Criterion	Rating
1	Strategic Relevance	<i>Satisfactory</i>
2	Quality of Project Design	<i>Moderately Satisfactory</i>
3	Nature of External Context	<i>Unfavourable</i>
4	Effectiveness (including availability of outputs; achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact)	<i>Moderately Satisfactory</i>
5	Financial Management	<i>Satisfactory</i>
6	Efficiency	<i>Moderately Unsatisfactory</i>
7	Monitoring and Reporting	<i>Moderately Satisfactory</i>
8	Sustainability	<i>Moderately Likely</i>

⁸ The six-point scale is as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU). The ratings against each criterion are ‘weighted’ to derive the Overall Project Performance Rating. The greatest weight is placed on the achievement of outcomes, followed by dimensions of sustainability.

Nº	Criterion	Rating
9	Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues.	<i>Moderately Unsatisfactory</i>
Overall Project Performance Rating		<i>Moderately Satisfactory</i>

Conclusions summary

17. The main achievements of the project were that the Aktau Protocol (*concerning regional preparedness, response and co-operation in combating oil pollution incidents*) and the Moscow Protocol (*for the protection of the Caspian Sea against pollution from land-based sources and activities*) successfully entered into force. On the other hand, the Ashgabat Protocol (*for the conservation of biological diversity*) and the EIA Protocol (*on environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context*) are still pending ratification. In addition, the delay in ratifying these crucial protocols had impeded progress on critical issues like biodiversity protection and environmental governance in transboundary contexts. Furthermore, the Monitoring Protocol on *monitoring, assessment and information exchange* is still under negotiation, reflecting challenges in aligning the priorities and interests of the Caspian States.

18. These achievements were brought about largely by the interim Secretariat of the Tehran Convention, within the framework of its functions (p.4 Article 23 TC), providing the Caspian Sea littoral countries with technical assistance and advice for the effective implementation of the Convention and its protocols. As well, in solving the environmental problems of the Caspian Sea through the organization of relevant events within the framework of the work programs of the Convention, organization of the development of SOE, the activities of the CEIC and others.

The positive role of the interim Secretariat has been repeatedly emphasized in the decisions of the sessions of Conferences of the Parties to the Convention. This reinforces the idea that the countries themselves are the primary decision-makers moving forward, with the Convention providing a platform for collaboration, governance, and policy-setting.

19. The implementation of the Tehran Convention has also been marked by challenges, one major struggle has been the delayed establishment of a permanent Secretariat for the Convention. Difficulties in securing consensus on its location and structure have delayed its formation, leading to fragmented and less efficient coordination of environmental activities. This absence of a permanent institutional body has impacted the continuity and effectiveness of projects and hindered the Convention's ability to fully achieve its planned outcomes.

20. The Tehran Convention keeps its full-fledged existence and development supported by the members-states' early contributions and the established Trust Fund. The Tehran Convention also actively mobilizes resources to develop projects on national and regional level.

Lessons Learned

21. Lesson 1: The Caspian Sea project highlights the importance of protecting shared natural resources through international cooperation and robust governance frameworks. Collective action can address complex transboundary issues effectively, by developing plans, integrating environmental matters and engaging stakeholders.

22. Lesson 2: The need for clear institutional mechanisms, trust-building, and multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure sustainable outcomes is emphasized. The project shows the necessity of accounting for political difficulties, as differing national interests and geopolitical tensions can hinder progress if not proactively managed.

Recommendations

23. Recommendation 1:

Develop a second phase of the project, including:

- A Theory of Change adapted to the current situation/reality.
- A detailed Work Plan with specific indicators and deadlines. Where possible, assign responsibility for every action.
- Identification of risks and management alternatives. In addition, a Mitigation Plan must be generated for the identified impacts and risks.
- A Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan or a Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) Plan should be developed for following up the Project's activities and results.
- Include Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF) and developed a report for its implementation in the project.
- A Communication Strategy, in order to communicate with internal and external stakeholders to achieve the indicators and goals. Also, for report the results to different stakeholders, and promotion of the Project itself to public and/or private sector.
- Consideration of human resources and gender topics.

24. Recommendation 2:

A Specific Plan should be developed in order to reach a consensus of the location and structure of the Permanent Secretariat in the region. This decision is taking several years, its resolution will allow efficient coordination on environmental activities. Moreover, a Financial Plan should be developed to obtain private financing. This would increase the project's activities and could lead to greater ownership by the stakeholders.

25. Recommendation 3:

Encourage Protocols' ratification/implementation/adoption by the signatory countries; and follow up of the finalization of Draft Protocol on Monitoring, Assessment and Information Exchange. Enhance regional scientific cooperation and data sharing, especially on transboundary environmental issues, for addressing emerging threats, like Caspian Sea level fluctuations, pollution monitoring, and biodiversity loss, with better precision and coordination.

26. Recommendation 4:

Human rights and gender dimensions should be included in project development. Also, feedback channels should be established in order to meet the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalized groups.

1 THE PROJECT

1.1 Context

27. The Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, commonly known as the Tehran Convention, is the first legally binding regional agreement signed by all five Caspian littoral states: Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan.
28. Adopted in 2003, the Convention aims to protect the Caspian Sea's fragile environment and its biodiversity by addressing pollution, promoting sustainable development, and facilitating cooperation among the member states. Over the years, the Tehran Convention has provided a crucial platform for environmental governance in the region, setting the stage for coordinated actions to protect one of the world's most unique and sensitive ecosystems. Within this context, the Project aimed at enhancing environmental governance and promoting sustainable development across the Caspian region.
29. The Project sought to address a range of critical issues, from pollution reduction to biodiversity conservation, through a series of strategic initiatives. The main Project objective was to establish an economically and socially sustainable pathway for halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity. This involved the adoption of strategic action plans for pollution reduction and biodiversity loss and the improvement of waste management practices.
30. The ultimate goal was to foster a sustainable and pollution-free development pathway that balanced economic prosperity with environmental stewardship in the Caspian Sea region. Since 2009, the Project evolved in response to various institutional, scientific, political, and financial contexts.
31. It is important to note that the primary aim of the Project "(Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea" was to create and elaborate the framework for the successful implementation of the Tehran Convention and its ancillary Protocols and to promote the ownership of the Caspian littoral States. As such, from the early stages of project design and through the entire life of the project, activities were always focused on, and responsive to, the specific needs of the key project stakeholders (notably the national state actors).

1.2 Results Framework

32. The project allowed UNEP Regional Office of Europe (ROE) to continue acting as the interim Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea and its protocols. Overall coordination was under the Ecosystems Division (formerly DEPI) and close collaboration was maintained with the Program Coordination Unit (PCU) of the UNDP GEF project on "The Caspian Sea: Restoring Depleted Fisheries and Consolidation of a Permanent Regional Environmental Governance Framework (CASPECO).
33. The project's components, objective, outcomes and outputs as the last approved results framework are captured in Table 3 below. Neither impact, nor intermediate state levels of results were identified at project design.

34. There was no Theory of Change (ToC) at project design and reconstructed ToC was developed at evaluation, it is detailed in Chapter 3. The project's results hierarchy as stated in the ProDoc as in Project Revisions (#19-24) is presented in Table 3, below.

Table 3: Summary of project's latest approved results framework

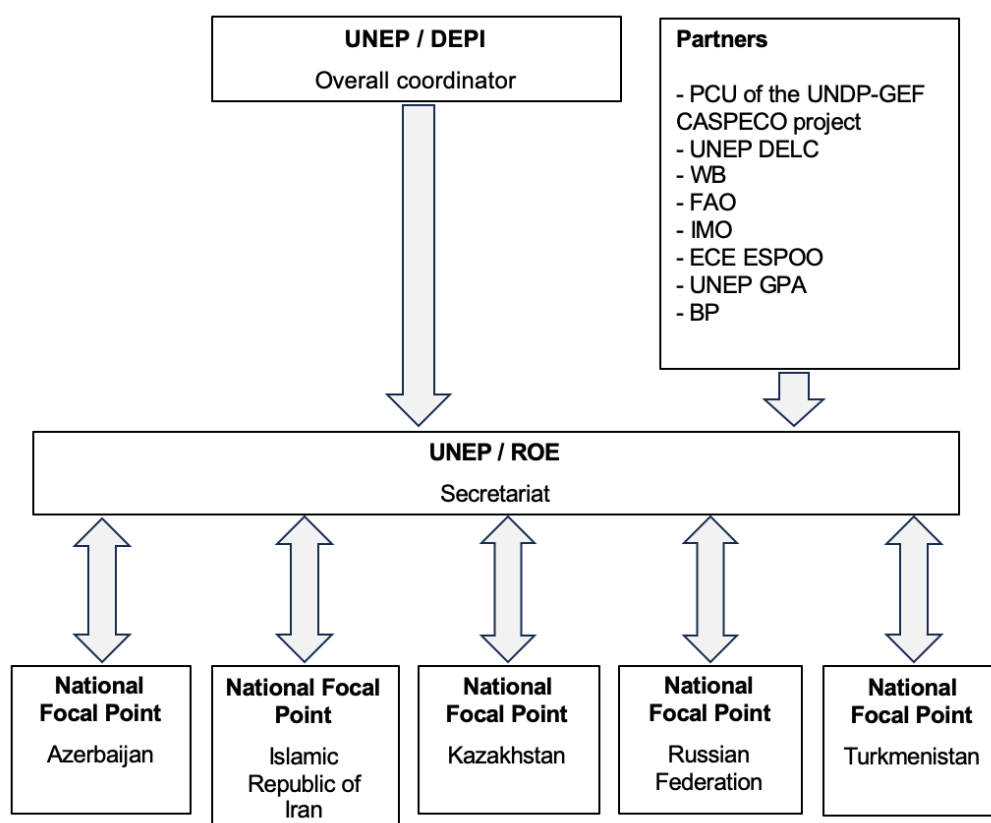
	Results Statement
Project objective	An economically and socially sustainable pathway for halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity is established.
Impact	--
Intermediate states	--
Project Outcomes	(A) Institutional ownership of the five Caspian littoral States for the Tehran Convention increased. (B) Operational framework for the implementation of the Convention / Protocols established. (C) Commitment of Caspian countries for collaborative action in the field of biodiversity conservation, pollution from land-based sources, environmental impact assessment and oil pollution incidents increased and embedded in national legislation.
Outputs	(A) Negotiation process facilitated towards reaching an agreement on the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat in the Caspian region and on two ancillary Protocols. (B) Conference of the Parties (COP) organized and facilitated, and Secretariat is operational. (C) Resource mobilization measures carried out; private sector engagement in the Convention process intensified. (D) NCAP adoption and implementation facilitated by the interim Secretariat. (E) Agreement on EMP Action Plan facilitated by the interim Secretariat. (F) Public awareness campaign organised on the Tehran Convention process and its practical implications for the public at large; Involvement of regional NGO network further enhanced. (G) Regional priority implementation plans for ancillary Protocols developed.

Source: Approved Project Revision 24, 2021.

1.3 Project Implementation Structure and Partners

35. The project's (interim) Secretariat was provided by UNEP ROE in Geneva under the overall coordination of UNEP DEPI and guided by the decision of the COP of the Tehran Convention, in close partnership with the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) of the UNDP - GEF CASPECO project and with the input support of UNEP DELC, WB, FAO, IMO, ECE ESPOO, UNEP GPA, and BP (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Organigram of the project with key project stakeholders



Source: Prodoc

36. The (interim) Secretariat based in Geneva, UNEP/ROE, performed the functions of the Convention and the decisions of the COP including servicing each of the protocols under consideration. The (interim) Secretariat reported on its activities to the COP.

37. The (interim) Secretariat in Geneva, mostly UNEP staff members, consisted of a part time Head and a full-time associate programme officer. Out-posted, locally recruited part time officers to deal with the protocols and other priority areas of regional cooperation were to be added, subject to the guidance and decisions of the COP.

38. It was anticipated that the out-posted units in the Caspian countries would give support to the project but this was to be firmed up with the Parties agreeing on permanent arrangements. It is noted that the National Focal point of each littoral country of the Caspian Sea has been in continuous communication with the Interim Secretariat and co-participated in the COPs that took place in the last years.

1.4 Stakeholders

39. The main stakeholders of this project were the five littoral countries, particularly the national agencies in charge of environment for each. These were clearly identified in the project document and subsequent revisions. The National Convention Liaison Officers (NCLOs) were the primary entry points with whom the (Interim) Secretariat engaged. Indeed, the bulk of the work of the Tehran Convention Interim Secretariat (TCIS) translated into national implementation activities that were carried through the intervention of the NCLOs. During the annual COPs, the key stakeholders were the negotiation partners, in most cases, the Environment Ministers and senior-level officials of Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Another important set of stakeholders were the key NGOs in each of the Caspian littoral States. However, the political and social context for NGO participation in the Caspian region is still under-developed. This factor, combined with limited resources, made it difficult for the (Interim) Secretariat in its public participation outreach efforts.
40. UNEP identifies as stakeholders all those who are affected by, or who could be affected (positively or negatively) by the intended results of any of the phases of a project. UNEP recognizes nine major groups as defined in Agenda 21. These groups are: Business and Industries, Children & Youth, Farmers, Indigenous People and their Communities, Local Authorities, NGO's, the Scientific & Technological Community, Women, Workers and Trade Unions. The nine major groups of stakeholders defined in Agenda 21 have been used, as it shows in Table 4.
41. The stakeholder analysis described below, was based on a desk review of documentary materials as the ProDoc and Project revisions (#19-24). Another source of information was the first introductory meetings that took place in November and December 2024 with key stakeholders for this report. All the information has been combined, as shown in the following table.
42. Table 5 provides a description of project groups of targeted stakeholders organised according to relevant common characteristics such as: interest/influence; roles/responsibilities or contributions/benefits etc.

Table 4: Stakeholder analysis for the Terminal Evaluation

Stakeholders	Explain the power they hold over the project results/implementation and the level of interest	Did they participate in the project, and how	Potential roles and responsibilities in project implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project
Type A: High power / high interest over the project = Key player				
National and Local government, Authorities of the 5 littoral states.	The power over the project is high. They can influence the level to which the objectives, impacts, outcomes and outputs are achieved.	Yes, they participated in the project. Aligning countries' needs to projects objectives, signing the Tehran Convention.	The responsibilities in the implementation of the project are: to attend meetings, participate in the development of files, propose ideas to documents and processes, sign, ratify, ensure the	Increased ownership of Tehran Convention and stronger commitment to protection of the Caspian Sea.

Stakeholders	Explain the power they hold over the project results/implementation and the level of interest	Did they participate in the project, and how	Potential roles and responsibilities in project implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project
			proper functioning of the Tehran Convention.	
Funds, development partners.	The power over the project is high. They can influence if the project itself take place or not. Also, they can influence the time schedule of the development of the project activities. e.g.: UN agencies, offices or departments, other UN projects, and /or private sector funds".	Yes, they participated in the project design and implementation. They provided the necessary funds to carry out the decision to start the project.	They may become partners and/or perennial partners for the Tehran Convention and its activities.	Could fund a second phase of the project, depending on the results obtained from first phase.
Type B: High power/ low interest over the project = Meet their needs				
Business and Industries	The power over the project is high, but their interest is low.	They have not participated in the project design but they did participate a little bit in the implementation.	They may become partners or funders of various Tehran Convention initiatives or projects.	Change of their attitude and became part of the Caspian Sea conservation wave, promote the endemism of the Caspian Sea and collaborate with scientific investigations.
Type C: Low power/ high interest over the Project = Show consideration				
NGO's	They have low power over the project results, but it can change over the lifetime of a second phase of the project. They have high interest in participating in project activities.	They have not participated in the project design, but they participated a little bit in the project implementation.	Active participation in environmental awareness campaigns.	Could lead an environmental awareness group for the protection and conservation of the Caspian Sea.
Women	Currently, they have low power over the project results. There is an increased interest to participate more in project activities.	They have not participated in the project design, but they participated a little bit in the project implementation.	Play an important role in the implementation of civil society initiatives in the Caspian Region.	Increased awareness of the importance of the conservation and protection of the Caspian Sea.
Scientific & Technological Community.	They hold low power over the project results. Their interests in the project may increase	They have not participated in the project design, but they	Active participation in the Convention's meetings about:	Increased active participation in all the

Stakeholders	Explain the power they hold over the project results/implementation and the level of interest	Did they participate in the project, and how	Potential roles and responsibilities in project implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project
	every day, due to the benefits the project may bring to their work and goals.	participated a little bit in the project implementation.	Protocols, scientific, innovation and environmental awareness topics.	scientific, innovation and conservation initiatives, the Tehran Convention is developing.
Local communities	They have low power over the project results. Their level of interest will depend on how much they get involved in the civil society activities developed by the Tehran Convention.	They have not participated in the project design, but they participated a little bit in the project implementation.	Their main potential role in project implementation is to participate in the activities organized by the Tehran convention. As an example: The Caspian Day.	Awareness of the importance of the conservation and protection of the Caspian Sea.
Fishermen	They have low power to the project results and implementation. But their level of interest is high because the project objective and impact would be beneficial for them and their industry.	They have not participated in the project design, but they participated a little bit in the project implementation.	They can become a source of climate data based on ancestral knowledge. They can be volunteers in coastal marine monitoring and safeguards, helping the government. They can participate in conferences where ocean and marine issues are discussed, e.g. development and implementation of protocols.	Awareness of the importance of the conservation and protection of the Caspian Sea. Aware of climate change and its consequences.
Type D: Low power /low interest over the Project = Least important				
Workers and Trade Unions.	They don't hold any power over the project results. The level of interest is proportional to the positive or negative impact of the project to their company's activities.	They have not participated in the project design but they participated a little bit in the project implementation.	They could participate in conferences where ocean and marine issues are discussed,	Awareness of the importance of the conservation and protection of the Caspian Sea.
Children & Youth	They don't hold any power over the project results. Their level of interest will depend on	They have not participated in the project design but they	They could participate in the activities that concern ocean	Awareness of the importance of the conservation

Stakeholders	Explain the power they hold over the project results/implementation and the level of interest	Did they participate in the project, and how	Potential roles and responsibilities in project implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project
	how much they are involved in the civil society activities the Tehran Convention develop.	participated a little bit in the project implementation.	and/or marine awareness topics that the Tehran Convention develop.	and protection of the Caspian Sea.
Religious leaders and Faith-based organizations	They don't hold any power over the project results. Their level of interest is minimal.	They have not participated in the project design nor implementation.	Allow the Tehran Convention and governments to act on behalf of the Caspian Sea.	Awareness of the importance of the conservation and protection of the Caspian Sea.

1.5 Changes in Design during Implementation

43. This section describes key events that affected the project's scope or parameters. The following are some of the implementation issues the project sustained:

- The project underwent 24 revisions since 2009 when it commenced. It is apparent that the project had a number of implementation issues as noted by the latest sought project revision number 24, approved in 2021, 11 years after the commencement of the project.
- The initial consensus on the arrangements for establishing the Tehran Convention Secretariat in the region faded because two countries expressed disagreement with the previously submitted proposals.
- For the following years, discussions continued to reach an agreement on the establishment and operation of the Tehran Convention Secretariat. Currently, there is no agreement on this matter.
- Additionally, the Project Revision #24 (2021) mentioned that among the implementation challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic affected project implementation by bringing about delays in negotiations between the Caspian countries on the arrangement for the Tehran Convention Secretariat.⁹

⁹ Project revision document number 24

1.6 Project Financing

44. The budget as in the Prodoc was USD 3,060,000 however, according to the latest project revision document¹⁰, dated December 2021, the total revised planned budget (planned and in-kind contributions) was USD 6,440,797. Nevertheless, the Operational Project Closure Template, dated January 2025 mentions a total revised planned budget \$ 6,041,196 in secured funding from participating countries and supporting project partners. The revised overall Project budget is shown in Table 5.

Project Coordination and Implementation Arrangements at The Global Level

45. The UNEP contribution to the Interim Secretariat covers only a small part of the staff and related operational costs of the Interim Secretariat. The GEF contribution which covers both staff and activities governed by the terms and conditions of UNDP GEF, through an interagency agreement between UNOPS – on behalf of UNDP GEF – and UNEP ROE as the Interim Secretariat.
46. UNEP administered the financial contributions from the stakeholders within the context of the present project and in accordance with the budget breakdown. The COP received financial reports from UNEP on the use of the country contributions under the present project. Financial reporting related to the Secretariat support provided by the UNDP GEF project, follow the rules and procedures of UNDP. UNEP ROE, as the Interim Secretariat was responsible and accountable for cost overruns and cash advances. The financial contributions from the Caspian countries and others stakeholders, were to be put into a trust fund, once the Permanent Convention Secretariat was in place. The trust fund was to be administered in accordance with the Financial Rules of the Convention.

Hand Over of Projects' Results to Stakeholders.

47. The transition of project supporting services of the Secretariat of the Tehran Convention to the new administrative framework i.e. Trust Fund, commenced a year prior to the project closure date. The transition had to ensure a proper financial handover to the new administrative framework in order to avoid any operational delays. The trust fund is managed from the UNEP ROE similarly to the preceding project which facilitated the transition period. The COP remains the main governing body of the Convention, and all significant and binding decisions regarding the Convention's processes and activities continue to be made there by the Caspian states.
48. The Tehran Convention keeps its full-fledged existence and development supported by the members-states' early contributions and the established Trust Fund. The Tehran Convention also actively mobilizes resources to develop projects on national and regional levels.

¹⁰ Project Revision #24

Table 5: Project Total Funding and Expenditures, ProDoc revision 2025

Funding by source (Life of project) All figures as USD	Planned funding	Secured funding	Expended
Funds from the Environment Fund	70 000	70 000	70 000
Funds from the Regular Budget	0	0	0
Extra-budgetary funding (listed per donor)	0	0	0
Tehran Convention (Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan)	5 629 485	4 779 963	4 760 356
Sub-total: Project Funding	5 699 485	4 849 963	4 830 356
Co-financing [1] (Cash and in-kind contributions) All figures as USD	Planned contributions	Secured contributions	Verified contributions
Co-financing cash contribution (listed by source):	0	0	0
Sub-total: co-financing contributions	0	0	0
Co-financing in-kind contribution (listed by source):			
EF	123,552	123,552	123,552
RB	708,608	708,604	708,604
Sub-total: in kind contributions	832,160	832,160	832,160
Staffing (Total throughout the project) All figures as Full Time Equivalents	Planned posts	Filled posts	Expended
Environment Fund staff-post costs	2 Positions 20% From 2022 to 2023 (123,552 USD in kind)	2 Positions 20% From 2022 to 2023 (123,552 USD in kind)	2 Positions 20% From 2022 to 2023 (123,552 USD in kind)
Regular Budget staff-post costs	1 Position 33% From 2016 to 2023 (708,604 USD in kind)	1 Position 33% From 2016 to 2023 (708,604 USD in kind)	1 Position 33% From 2016 to 2023 (708,604 USD in kind)
Extra-budgetary funding for staff-posts (listed per donor)	1 Position 100% from April 2021 to Dec 2023 (378,680 USD)	1 Position 100% from April 2021 to Dec 2023 (378,680 USD)	1 Position 100% from April 2021 to Dec 2023 (378,680 USD)
Sub-Total: Staffing	1,210,836	1,210,836	1,210,836
Grand Total	6,910,325	6,060,803	6,041,196

2 EVALUATION METHODS

2.1 UNEP's Evaluation Approach

49. In line with UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual, the evaluation was undertaken at operational completion. However, the Evaluation Office of UNEP completed a terminal evaluation (TE) of this project in March 2015 as the project was nearing, what was scheduled to be the project completion date. Due to subsequent extensions, the project concluded in 2023, leading to a request for a new final project evaluation.
50. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned.
51. The main target audiences for the evaluation findings are UNEP and the Caspian Littoral states of: Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, and Turkmenistan.
52. This evaluation focused on assessing project performance (in terms of effectiveness, including availability of outputs; achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact) from 2015 to 2023, to cover the period after the 2015 TE to the end of the project. It also focused on assessing the sustainability of project results and identifying the factors that affected project performance.
53. The 2015 TE assessed performance against these three and another six commonly applied criteria. A total of 9 evaluation criteria, including: (1) Strategic Relevance, (2) Quality of Project Design, (3) Nature of External Context, (4) Effectiveness 5) Financial Management, (6) Efficiency, (7) Monitoring and Reporting, (8) Sustainability and (9) Factors affecting Performance and Cross-cutting Issues.
54. Most evaluation criteria are rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU). The ratings against each criterion are 'weighted' to derive the Overall Project Performance Rating. The greatest weight is placed on the achievement of outcomes, followed by dimensions of sustainability.
55. The UNEP Evaluation Office has developed detailed descriptions of the main elements required to be demonstrated at each level (i.e. Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory) for each evaluation criterion. The evaluator has considered all the evidence gathered during the evaluation in relation to this matrix to generate evaluation criteria performance ratings for Effectiveness, Sustainability, and Factors Affecting Performance.
56. In addition to the 9 evaluation criteria outlined above, the evaluation addresses some strategic questions (SQ) that were formulated in the Terms of Reference. These questions were posed by the UNEP Evaluation Office in conjunction with members of the Project Team.

SQ1: How much financial and technical assistance to the region has been provided pursuant to the signing of the Caspian Framework Convention by the Caspian Governments?

SQ2. What are some environmental actions that have been undertaken by the Caspian Governments following the signing of the Caspian Framework Convention?

SQ3. What agreement(s) have been reached on the role of the Tehran Convention process?

SQ4. What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?

57. In addition, this evaluation sought to assess the extent to which the project implemented the recommendations from the 2015 TE.
58. This evaluation adopted a participatory approach, consulting with project team members, partners and beneficiaries at several stages throughout the process. Central to the evaluation was the analysis (and reconstruction) of the project's Theory of Change. Consultations were held during the evaluation inception phase to arrive at a nuanced understanding of how the project intended to drive change and what contributing conditions ('assumptions' and 'drivers') would need to be in place to support such change. The (reconstructed) Theory of Change, supported by a graphic representation and narrative discussion of the causal pathways, was discussed further with respondents during the data collection phase, and refined as appropriate. The final iteration of the Theory of Change is presented in this final evaluation report and has been used throughout the evaluation process.

2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 Primary data sources

59. The primary data collection method was a round of interviews. The meetings were virtual introductory meetings of one hour maximum each one, via Google Meet platform, administered by the consultant Gmail account. They took place with the main stakeholders, previously discussed with the Evaluation Team (Evaluation Officer and Tehran Convention Officer - Europe Office). The main stakeholders were obtained from the Terminal Evaluation of 2015. A lot of them were no longer working at UNEP or on the project. Once the first draft of a stakeholders list was made, it was updated by the helpful revision of the actual Tehran Convention Officer of the Europe Office.
60. A presentation letter in English, where the consultant in charge of the Terminal Evaluation was introduced, was sent to the stakeholders in an email by the Evaluation Manager. Additionally, an email written in English and Russian was sent by the Tehran Convention Officer of the Europe Office to the same list of stakeholders to reinforce.
61. After waiting a prudent period of time, the consultant emailed the previously contacted stakeholders to schedule the meetings and conduct the introductory interviews. A meeting agenda for the interviews was made and it was shared via email with the confirmed stakeholders, see Annex II.
62. The objective of this round of meetings was to introduce the consultant and gather both general and more specific information that could inform the inception report and the first draft report. Also, the evaluator focused on familiarizing with the project.

63. The data from each interview was registered in writing and also video audio-recorded (after having received explicit permission from the interviewees). Data were collected with respect for ethics and human rights issues.
64. Annex II summarizes the stakeholders with whom meetings took place.

2.2.2 Secondary data sources

65. The Secondary data source was obtained by a desk review of documentary materials (e.g. Project Document, review of Project, Annual Work Plans and Budgets, Project reports, State of Environment report, project deliverables, monitoring information, articles, publications, others) provided by project team or retrieved by the consultant. The evaluation was complemented with third-party documents. The list of documents consulted is included in Annex III.

Data Analysis

66. After having finished gathering the data from desk review and first round of meetings, all of these were used to create the inception report. The inception report was sent to the Evaluation Manager for feedback. The evaluation consultant took into consideration all the comments provided and presented a final inception report.
67. The final first draft of evaluation report gathers all the information provided by the evaluation and project team. The final first draft was sent to the Evaluation Manager for feedback. A revised first draft was shared with the stakeholders for their feedback on factual accuracy and the report finalised after consideration of their comments.

Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

68. One of the limitations at the start of the evaluation was the low response rate from stakeholders contacted to conduct online interviews. This low response rate was due to many emails no longer working, or staff no longer working where they had previously been employed. Fortunately, despite the low response rate, the interviews were carried out.
69. Another limitation was the untimely delivery of various documents. Although the documentation was shared with the consultant in the first months of the evaluation, there were documents that continued to be shared with the consultant over the last few months. This influenced the analysis, which was modified over the last few months.

3 THEORY OF CHANGE AT EVALUATION

70. The requirement to include a Theory of Change (ToC) in the official UNEP project document (ProDoc) template was introduced in late 2011. In an evaluation, a ToC is used to provide a framework to help inform the assessment of an intervention's effectiveness and likelihood of impact.
71. The ProDoc for the project "(Interim) Secretariat services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea" did not have a ToC. Hence, a ToC at Evaluation Inception was prepared using all the project documents received by the evaluation consultant. Outcomes and outputs were revised, and a ToC was reconstructed.
72. As addressed in earlier section, this evaluation focuses on project performance from 2015 to 2023. In line with this context, the restructured TOC focuses on causal pathways and results between 2015 and 2023.
73. A summary of the project's results hierarchy for: a) the results as stated in the approved/last formally revised Prodoc logframe, and b) as formulated in the ToC at Evaluation are presented as a three-column table (Table 6) to show clearly that, although wording and placement may have changed, the results 'goal posts' have not been 'moved'.
74. The ToC at Evaluation is presented clearly in both narrative (Table 6 and Table 7) and diagrammatic (Figure 2) forms.
75. The proposed impact of the project is: "Improved sustainable management and protection of the Caspian Sea. Two major areas the Convention focuses on: (i) protection, preservation and restoration of the marine environment; and (ii) prevention, reduction and control from all sources of pollution".
76. In order to achieve the intended impact, there are external factors or conditions that need to be present but are beyond the influence of the project and its partners, known as assumptions. The following assumptions have been identified to reach the Impact from the Intermediate States
- High level national and international political support.
 - Human rights and gender equality are included.
77. Drivers, which are also external factors that contribute to the realization of the intended results of the project, and which can be influenced by the project and its partners were also identified. There are some drivers that can also support the achievement of the intended impact; the following were identified:
- The 5 littoral countries continue to commit to contributing to the management and protection of Caspian Sea.
 - Existence of funding for the second phase of the project.
78. The Intermediate States are those changes in behaviour or condition that occur after the accomplishment of project Outcomes, and that are essential pre-conditions for the accomplishment of the impact of the project. The original ProDoc did not have Intermediate States and five Intermediate States have been introduced in the reconstructed ToC. These Intermediate States are:
- Intermediate State #1 = Governmental ownership of Caspian Sea by littoral states.
 - Intermediate State #2 = Secured funding and budget for the Tehran Convention exists.

- Intermediate State #3 = Successful implementation of the Tehran Convention and protocols.
- Intermediate State #4 = Scientific evidence for environmental and climate topics established.
- Intermediate State #5 = Civil and private society is involved in the Tehran Convention.

79. For the Intermediate State #1-Governmental ownership of Caspian Sea by littoral states to occur, the following assumption and driver should be in place:

Assumption: - *Existence of the engagement of governments of Caspian Sea littoral states.*

Driver: - *Recognition of the importance of sustainable management and protection of the Caspian Sea.*

80. For the Intermediate State #2- Secured funding and budget for the Tehran Convention to exist, the following assumption and driver should be hold:

Assumption: - *Resource mobilization measures carried out by each littoral state, budget allocation.*

Driver: - *Environmental and economic priorities balanced by each littoral state.*

81. For the Intermediate State #3- Successful implementation of the Tehran Convention and protocols, the following assumptions and driver should be present:

Assumption: - *Country financial contributions established.*
- *Implementation plans in place.*

Driver: - *Parties increased contributions regularly.*

82. For the Intermediate State #4-Scientific evidence for environmental and climate topics established, the following assumption and driver should be obtained:

Assumption: - *Increase of scientific evidence in environmental and climate topics.*

Driver: - *Scientific research developed in all Caspian region by universities or institutes.*

83. For the Intermediate State #5-Civil and private society is involved in the Tehran Convention, the following assumption and driver should be ready:

Assumption: - *Civil and private society are invited and they participated in all workshops, meetings, activities and celebrations the Tehran Convention organized.*

Driver: - *Existing platforms where civil and private society discuss about different topics concerning Caspian Sea.*

84. These intermediate states would be reached with the correct implementation not only with the assumptions and drivers, but also with project outcomes established. Specifically, Intermediate State #1 is related with Outcome A, Intermediate State #2 and #3 are related with Outcome B and Intermediate State #4 and #5 are related with Outcome C.

85. The project Outcomes A, B, and C are listed below:

- Outcome A = Institutional ownership of the five Caspian littoral States for the Tehran Convention increased and established.
- Outcome B = Operational framework for the implementation of the Convention/ Protocols established¹¹.

¹¹ Aktau Protocol concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents (adopted and signed at COP-3 in Aktau, Kazakhstan on August 12, 2011); Moscow Protocol on the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land based Sources and Activities (adopted at COP-4 in Moscow, December 12, 2012); Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Trans-Boundary Context (adopted at COP-4 in Moscow on December 12, 2012); and Ashgabat Protocol on the Conservation of Biological Diversity (adopted and signed at COP-5 in May 30, 2014).

- **Outcome C** = Commitment of Caspian countries for collaborative action in the field of biodiversity conservation, pollution from land-based sources, environmental impact assessment and oil pollution incidents increased and embedded in national legislation.

86. The project document did not associate Outcomes with Outputs needed, but this evaluation report has done it. As previously mentioned, Table 7 and Table 8 show the association of Outcomes with Outputs. Minimal reformulations were made to some Outputs.

87. Outcomes A, B and C, and their relevant assumptions, drivers and correspondence Outputs are mentioned below as part of the reconstructed ToC. They are as follows:

- **Outcome A = Institutional ownership of the five Caspian littoral States for the Tehran Convention increased and established.**

Assumption: - Willingness, among member countries of Caspian Sea region, of having a consensus decision about the establishment permanent secretariat.

- Project budget planning developed.

Driver: - Transboundary Capacity – building.

Outputs to achieve Outcome A =

- Facilitation of the negotiation process towards reaching an agreement on the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat of the Tehran Convention and on ancillary Protocols.
- COP organized and facilitated.
- Support the Secretariat become operational.

- **Outcome B = Operational framework for the implementation of the Convention/ Protocols established¹².**

Assumption: - Legal commitments for implementation of Convention/protocols done.

Driver: - Existence of Private sector funding.

Outputs to achieve Outcome B =

- Engagement of the private sector in the Convention intensified to help mobilize resources.
- Regional priority implementation plans for the ancillary protocols developed.

Outcome C = Commitment of Caspian countries for collaborative action in the field of biodiversity conservation, pollution from land-based sources, environmental impact assessment and oil pollution incidents increased and embedded in national legislation.

Assumption: - Political will of governments of littoral states of Caspian Sea.

¹² Aktau Protocol concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents (adopted and signed at COP-3 in Aktau, Kazakhstan on August 12, 2011); Moscow Protocol on the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land based Sources and Activities (adopted at COP-4 in Moscow, December 12, 2012); Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Trans-Boundary Context (adopted at COP-4 in Moscow on December 12, 2012); and Ashgabat Protocol on the Conservation of Biological Diversity (adopted and signed at COP-5 in May 30, 2014).

- Scientific data in a comparable measurement units' system (homologate) is shared.
- Publicity of activities and release of results of the Tehran Convention are intensified, gains momentum.

Driver:

- Engagement of NGOs.
- Financial support of private sector.

Outputs to achieve Outcome C =

- The Interim Secretariat facilitates adaptation and implementation of NCAP in each of the Caspian littoral countries.
- The Interim Secretariat facilitates the agreement on EMP Action Plan on the Caspian region.
- Public awareness campaign organized on the Tehran Convention process and its practical implications for the public at large.
- Involvement of regional NGO network further enhanced.
- Caspian Environmental Information Center (CEIC) updated as a tool for web-based environment data collection, sharing, monitoring, analysis, harmonization and public communication.

Table 6: Justification for reformulation of results statements

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
(LONG LASTING) IMPACT		
The Tehran Convention aims at protecting the Caspian environment from all sources of pollution and also targets the preservation, restoration and protection of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea. The two major areas of concern are (i) prevention, reduction and control of pollution, and (ii) protection, preservation and restoration of the marine environment.	Sustainable management and protection of the Caspian Sea. The two major areas of concern are: (i) protection, preservation and restoration of the marine environment; and (ii) prevention, reduction and control from all sources of pollution.	The reformulation is based on the correct use of the words and its dictionary definition. It is used "sustainable management", because it means the management will last over time and refers to environmental, social and economic themes. The word "Management" focuses on controlling operations and decision-making (including preservation and restoration), while the word "protection" prioritizes security and preventing risks.
INTERMEDIATE STATES		
Intermediate state missing	<u>Intermediate state #1 related with</u> <u>Outcome A =</u> Governmental ownership of Caspian Sea by littoral states.	No intermediate states were found in the original project document. Intermediate state proposals adjusted to the outcomes and the long-lasting impact.
Intermediate state missing	<u>Intermediate state #2 related with</u> <u>Outcome A =</u>	No intermediate states were found in the original project document.

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
	Secured funding and budget for the TC exists.	Intermediate state proposals adjusted to the outcomes and the long-lasting impact.
Intermediate state missing	<u>Intermediate state #3 related with Outcome B = Successful implementation of the Tehran Convention and protocols</u>	No intermediate states were found in the original project document. Intermediate state proposals adjusted to the current reality.
Intermediate state missing	<u>Intermediate state #4 related with Outcome C = Scientific evidence for environmental and climate topics established.</u>	No intermediate states were found in the original project document. Intermediate state proposals adjusted to the current reality.
Intermediate state missing	<u>Intermediate state #5 related with Outcome C = Civil and private society is involved in the Tehran Convention.</u>	No intermediate states were found in the original project document. Intermediate state proposals adjusted to the current reality.
PROJECT OUTCOMES ESTABLISHED IN 2014 LOGICAL FRAMEWORK, AND IN THE MOST RECENTLY APPROVED REVISION #24 (2021)		
A. Institutional ownership of the five Caspian littoral States for the Tehran Convention increased	<u>Outcome A =</u> Institutional ownership of the five Caspian littoral States for the Tehran Convention increased.	No reframe proposed.
B. Operational framework for the implementation of the Convention/ Protocols established	<u>Outcome B =</u> Operational framework for the implementation of the Convention/ Protocols established ¹³ .	No reframe proposed.
C. Commitment of Caspian countries for collaborative action in the fields of biodiversity conservation, pollution from land-based sources, environmental impact assessment and oil pollution incidents increased and embedded in national legislation.	<u>Outcome C:</u> Commitment of Caspian countries for collaborative action in the fields of biodiversity conservation, pollution from land-based sources, environmental impact assessment and oil pollution incidents increased and embedded in national legislation.	No reframe proposed.
OUTCOME INDICATORS		
A. Number of institutional decisions / measures taken by countries to Establish ownership	No comment.	No comment.

¹³ Aktau Protocol concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents (adopted and signed at COP-3 in Aktau, Kazakhstan on August 12, 2011); Moscow Protocol on the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land based Sources and Activities (adopted at COP-4 in Moscow, December 12, 2012); Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Trans-Boundary Context (adopted at COP-4 in Moscow on December 12, 2012); and Ashgabat Protocol on the Conservation of Biological Diversity (adopted and signed at COP-5 in May 30, 2014).

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
of the Convention process in the region.		
B. Number of regional/national implementation plans substantiating the legal commitments.	No comment.	No comment.
C. Number of legal instruments for collaboration on identified environmental priority areas of concern by Caspian countries.	No comment.	No comment.
PROJECT OUTPUTS ESTABLISHED IN THE LOGICAL FRAMEWORK FROM 2014, AND IN THE MOST RECENTLY APPROVED REVISION #24 (2021)		
A. Negotiation process facilitated towards reaching an agreement on the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat in the Caspian region and on two ancillary Protocols.	<u>Output A to achieve Outcome A</u> ≡ - Facilitation of the negotiation process towards reaching an agreement on the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat of the Tehran Convention and on ancillary Protocols.	Minimal editorial changes added. It is not clear to date whether the Permanent Secretariat will be in the Caspian region or outside it, nor by whom it will be led.
B. Conference of the Parties (COP) organized and facilitated, and Secretariat is operational.	<u>Output B to achieve Outcome A</u> ≡ - Conference of the Parties (COP) organized and facilitated - Support the Secretariat to become operational.	Edited because "the Secretariat is operational" is an Outcome, not an Output.
C. Resource mobilization measures carried out, private sector engagement in the Convention process intensified.	<u>Output C to achieve Outcome B</u> ≡ - Engagement of the private sector in the Convention intensified to help mobilize resources.	This reformulation would allow for better alignment and tracking with the output indicators which are focused on measuring private sector engagement.
D. NCAP adaptation and implementation facilitated by the Interim Secretariat	<u>Output D to achieve Outcome C</u> ≡ - The Interim Secretariat facilitates adaptation and implementation of NCAP in each of the Caspian littoral countries.	The reformulation placed the emphasis on the provision of services to the intended beneficiaries, in line with UNEP results definitions. National Convention Action Plans (NCAP) still in Final Drafts. They have not yet been implemented for any country.
E. Agreement on Environmental Monitoring Programme EMP Action Plan facilitated by the interim Secretariat	<u>Output E to achieve Outcome C</u> ≡ - The Interim Secretariat facilitates the agreement on EMP Action Plan on the Caspian region.	Minimal reframe proposed.

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
F. Public awareness campaign organized on the Tehran Convention process and its practical implications for the public at large, involvement of regional NGO network further enhanced.	<u>Output F to achieve Outcome C</u> ≡ - Public awareness campaign organized on the Tehran Convention process and its practical implications for the public at large. <u>Output I to achieve Outcome C</u> ≡ - Involvement of regional NGO network further enhanced.	The suggestion is to break it into two outputs; because they are different: topics and stakeholders involved. This will help to follow them with indicators.
G. Caspian Environment Information Center (CEIC) updated as a tool for web-based environment data collection, sharing, monitoring, analysis, harmonization and public communication.	<u>Output G to achieve Outcome C</u> ≡ - Caspian Environment Information Center (CEIC) updated as a tool for web-based environment data collection, sharing, monitoring, analysis, harmonization and public communication.	This output was eliminated in the transition of Project revision#19 of 2016 and Project revision #20 of 2017. In last Project revision #24 of 2021 no longer included.
H. Regional priority implementation plans for ancillary Protocols developed.	<u>Output H to achieve Outcome B</u> ≡ - Regional priority implementation plans for the ancillary protocols developed.	No reframe proposed.
OUTPUT INDICATORS		
A. Number of agreements finalized	No comment.	No comment.
B. Host country agreement signed; Staff contracted for Secretariat in place	No comment.	No comment.
C. Private sector companies participating in Convention meetings; Project proposals for private sector engagement developed	No comment.	No comment.
D. Number of NCAP reports developed; Analysis paper on implementation produced	No comment.	No comment.
E. Number of intergovernmental meetings on EMP	No comment.	No comment.
F. Regional NGOs represented at COP6/ Caspian Day celebrations held;	No comment.	No comment.

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
Awareness raising events held		
G. H. Number of agreed implementation documents	No comment.	No comment.

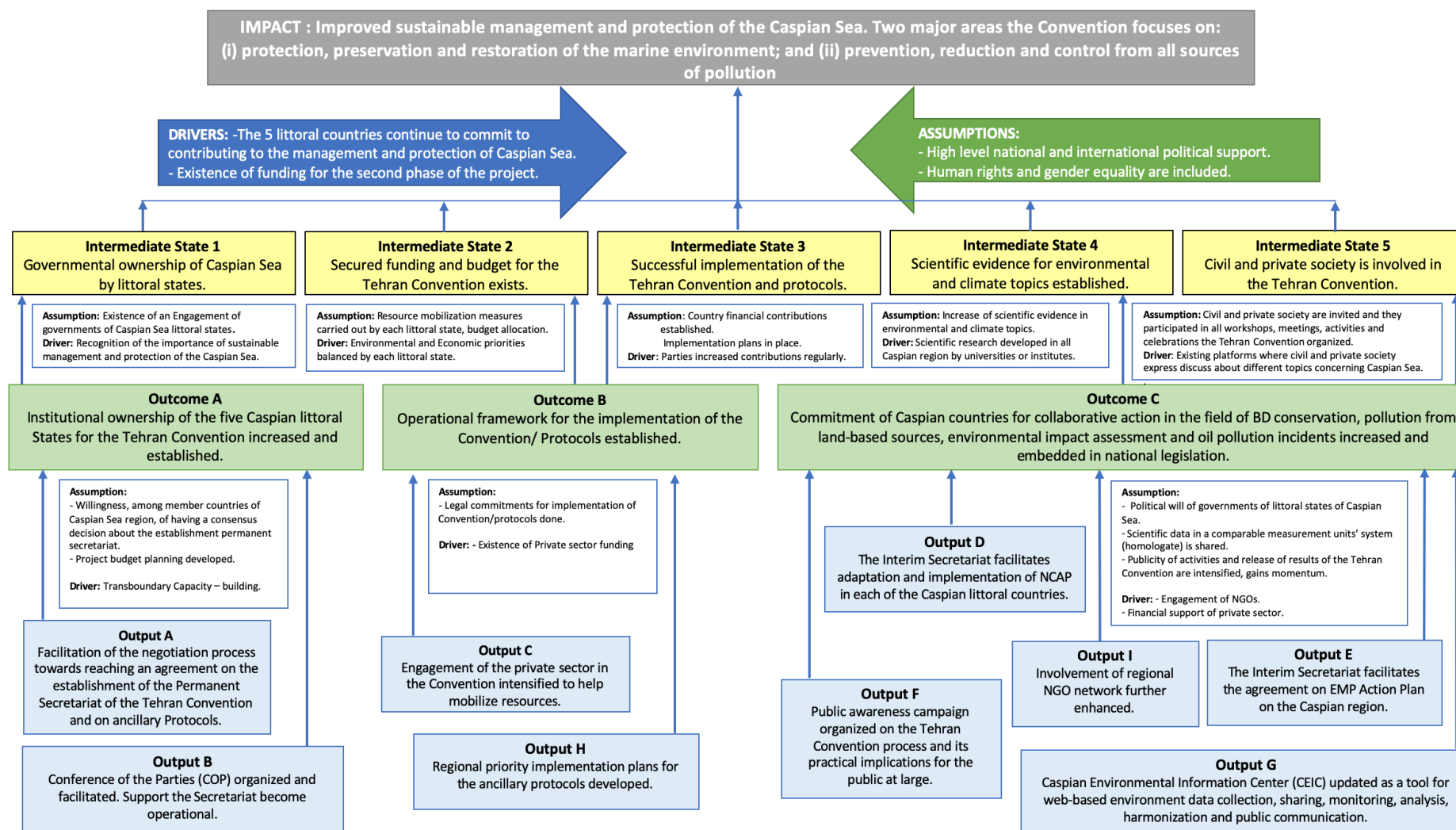
Table 7: Justification for reformulation / expansion of drivers and assumptions

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
TO REACH THE IMPACT FROM THE INTERMEDIATE STATES		
DRIVERS		
Driver 1 to achieve Project Impact missing	<u>Driver 1 to achieve project impact:</u> - The 5 littoral countries continue to commit to contributing to the management and protection of Caspian Sea.	No drivers were found in the original project document.
Driver 2 to achieve Project Impact missing	<u>Driver 2 to achieve project impact:</u> - Existence of funding for the second phase of the project.	No drivers were found in the original project document.
ASSUMPTIONS		
Assumption 1 to achieve Project Impact missing	<u>Assumption 1 to achieve project impact:</u> - High level national and international political support.	No assumptions were found in the original project document.
Assumption 2 to achieve Project Impact missing	<u>Assumption 2 to achieve project impact:</u> - Human rights and gender equality are included ¹⁴ .	No assumptions were found in the original project document.
TO REACH THE INTERMEDIATE STATES FROM THE OUTCOMES		
DRIVERS		
Driver to achieve Intermediate state #1 missing	<u>Driver to achieve Intermediate state #1:</u> - Recognition of the importance of sustainable management and protection of the Caspian Sea.	No drivers were found in the original project document.
Driver to achieve Intermediate state #2 missing	<u>Driver to achieve Intermediate state #2:</u> - Environmental and Economic priorities balanced by each littoral state.	No drivers were found in the original project document.
Driver to achieve Intermediate state #3 missing	<u>Driver to achieve Intermediate state #3:</u> - Parties increased contributions regularly.	No drivers were found in the original project document.
Driver to achieve Intermediate state #4 missing	<u>Driver to achieve Intermediate state #4:</u> - Scientific research developed in all Caspian region by universities or institutes.	No drivers were found in the original project document.
Driver to achieve Intermediate state #5 missing	<u>Driver to achieve Intermediate state #5:</u> - Existing platforms where civil and private society discuss about different topics concerning Caspian Sea.	No drivers were found in the original project document.
ASSUMPTIONS		

¹⁴ If the project design document and the framework are silent on human rights and gender equality, the following assumption must be included in the TOC: 'The project works toward the UN principles on human rights and gender equality'.

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
Assumption to achieve Intermediate state #1 missing	<u>Assumption to achieve Intermediate state #1:</u> - Existence of an Engagement of governments of Caspian Sea littoral states.	No assumptions were found in the original project document.
Assumption to achieve Intermediate state #2 missing	<u>Assumption to achieve Intermediate state #2:</u> - Resource mobilization measures carried out by each littoral state, budget allocation.	No assumptions were found in the original project document.
Assumption to achieve Intermediate state #3 missing	<u>Assumption to achieve Intermediate state #3:</u> - Country financial contributions established. - Implementation plans in place.	No assumptions were found in the original project document.
Assumption to achieve Intermediate state #4 missing	<u>Assumption to achieve Intermediate state #4:</u> - Increase of scientific evidence in environmental and climate topics.	No assumptions were found in the original project document.
Assumption to achieve Intermediate state #5 missing	<u>Assumption to achieve Intermediate state #5:</u> - Civil and private society are invited and they participated in all workshops, meetings, activities and celebrations the Tehran Convention organized.	No assumptions were found in the original project document.
TO REACH THE OUTCOMES FROM THE OUTPUTS		
DRIVERS		
Driver to achieve Outcome A missing	<u>Driver to achieve Outcome A:</u> - Transboundary Capacity – building.	No drivers were found in the original project document.
Driver to achieve Outcome B missing	<u>Driver to achieve Outcome B:</u> - Existence of Private sector funding.	No drivers were found in the original project document.
Drivers to achieve Outcome C missing	<u>Driver to achieve Outcome C:</u> - Engagement of NGOs. - Financial support of private sector.	No drivers were found in the original project document.
ASSUMPTIONS		
Assumption to achieve Outcome A missing	<u>Assumption to achieve Outcome A:</u> - Willingness, among member countries of Caspian Sea region, of having a consensus decision about the establishment permanent secretariat. - Project budget planning developed.	No assumptions were found in the original project document.
Assumption to achieve Outcome B missing	<u>Assumption to achieve Outcome B:</u> - Legal commitments for implementation of Convention/protocols done.	No assumptions were found in the original project document.
Assumption to achieve Outcome C missing	<u>Assumption to achieve Outcome C:</u> - Political will of governments of littoral states of Caspian Sea. - Scientific data in a comparable measurement units' system (homologate) is shared.	No assumptions were found in the original project document.

Figure 2. Theory of change at evaluation



4 EVALUATION FINDINGS¹⁵

88. This chapter is organized according to the evaluation criteria presented in the TORs and reflected in the project performance ratings table. The Evaluation Findings section provides a summative analysis of all triangulated data relevant to the parameters of the criteria. The evaluation findings are objective, relate to the evaluation objectives/questions, be clearly stated and supported by sufficient evidence. This is the main substantive section of the report and incorporates indicative evidence¹⁶ as appropriate. Ratings are provided at the end of the assessment of each evaluation criterion and the complete ratings table is included under the Conclusions (section 5) below. The overall rating for each section was calculated through the UNEP Evaluation Criteria Rating Matrix and the Weighted Ratings Table.

4.1 Strategic Relevance

89. The evaluation of this project, “416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea”, was assessed in line with the OECD/DAC definition of relevance, “the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor”. The evaluation includes an assessment of the project’s relevance in relation to UNEP’s mandate and its alignment with UNEP’s policies and strategies at the time of project implementation 2015-2023. This criterion, Strategic Relevance, comprises four elements.

The four elements of Strategic Relevance are:

1. Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy¹⁷ (MTS), Programme of Work ¹⁸ (POW) and Strategic Priorities.
2. Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partner Strategic Priorities.
3. Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities.
4. Complementarity with Existing Relevant Interventions/ Coherence¹⁹.

4.1.1 Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities

90. The final evaluation scope for the project “416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea” was between the years 2015 – 2023. Because of this reason, the evaluation has been assessed under the project’s alignment with the 3 consecutive editions of the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS) that occurred in the periods of: 2014-2017, 2018-2021, 2022-2025.

¹⁵ Refer to the TOR for descriptions of the nature and scope of each criterion.

¹⁶ This may include brief quotations, anecdotal experiences, project events or descriptive statistics from surveys etc. The anonymity of all respondents should be protected.

¹⁷ UNEP’s Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP’s programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP’s thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes.

¹⁸ UNEP’s Programme of Work (POW) sets out UNEP’s results framework over a two-year period, focused on the objectives outlined in the MTS.

¹⁹ This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of ‘Coherence’ introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.

Table 8: Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW), and Strategic Priorities

UNEP strategic document	Alignment with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities	Level of alignment
MTS (2014-2017), (2018-2021), (2022-2025).	Alignment with UNEP MTS 2014- 2017 by 4 of the sub programmes: Ecosystem management for development, Environmental governance, Chemicals and waste, and Environment under review. Complied UNEP MTS 2018-2022 by four priority areas: Healthy and Productive Ecosystems, Environmental Governance, Chemicals Waste and Environment under Review. For the final years of its implementation, the project set the UNEP MTS 2022-2025, with four interlinked sub programmes for action: Nature Action, Chemicals and Pollutions Action, Science Policy, and Environmental Governance.	<i>Full alignment</i>
POW (2009-2023) ²⁰	Associated Programme /PCP: Environmental Governance The PoW Outcome(s) to which the project contributes <u>Outcome 1A:</u> Decision-makers at all levels adopt decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways. <u>Direct Outcome:</u> 1.1 Policymaking and decision-making for climate action are informed by the latest science-based analysis and data generation. <u>Outcome 2A:</u> An economically and socially sustainable pathway for halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity is established. <u>Outcome 2C:</u> Nature conservation and restoration are enhanced. <u>Direct Outcomes:</u> 2.1 Collective action by United Nations system entities addresses biodiversity loss and promotes conservation and restoration. 2.3 Productive land and seascapes and fresh water are sustainably managed. 2.8. Sustainable ocean and coastal economy contribute to prosperity and pollution-free development 2.13 Commitments and actions to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems are enhanced. <u>Outcome 3B:</u> Waste management is improved, including through circular processes, safe recovery of secondary raw materials and progressive reduction of open burning and dump sites. <u>Outcome 3C:</u> Releases of pollutants to air, water, soil and the ocean are reduced. <u>Direct Outcome:</u> 3.2 Land-based sources of pollution in fresh water and oceans, including marine litter and nutrients, are reduced.	<i>Full alignment</i>
Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and	UNEP-ROE facilitated effective support for the implementation of the Bali Plan at its national and regional levels. The cross-cutting issues and thematic areas that the project addressed under the plan are: (a) Cross-cutting issues:	<i>Partial alignment</i>

²⁰ POW mentioned at the Operational Project Closure Report, 2025.

UNEP strategic document	Alignment with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities	Level of alignment
Capacity Building ²¹	(i) Strengthening of national and regional environmental or environment-related institutions (government institutions, judiciary, enforcement); (ii) Assistance for facilitating compliance with and enforcement of obligations under multilateral environmental agreements and implementation of environmental commitments. (b) Thematic areas: (ii) Climate change; (vi) Oceans and seas and coastal areas, including regional seas and the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities; (vii) Chemicals; (viii) Waste management; (ix) Pollution; (x) Health and environment; (xiii) Transboundary conservation and sustainable management of natural resources when agreed by the countries concerned.	
South-South Cooperation ²¹	f) South-south cooperation 4 out of 5 Caspian States are considered as Global South countries (Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan). Sustainable development is important for the region as it helps to ensure long-term economic growth, social well-being, and environmental protection. By working together under the Convention, Caspian countries can share knowledge, resources, and best practices to address common environmental challenges and promote sustainable practices in their region and globally.	<i>Partial alignment</i>
RESULT OF EVALUATION of Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW), and Strategic Priorities		<i>PARTIAL ALIGNMENT</i>

91. The project, "416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea", implemented The BSP by:

- By increasing the importance of South-South cooperation and intensifying efforts directed towards institutional capacity-building of Caspian Sea management ²².
- Generated information of the Caspian Sea for decision-making: in line with science, monitoring and assessment.
- Developed project's reports, and monitoring and evaluation guidelines.
- Established voluntary financial mechanisms and options providing additional resources through project lifetime.

92. The project "416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea", followed S-SC basic objectives.

The objectives tracked are:

- Fostered self-reliance of the littoral countries of the Caspian Sea by enhancing their creative capacity to find solutions to Caspian Sea development problems.
- Promoted collective self-reliance among the littoral countries of the Caspian Sea through the pooling, sharing and use of their technical and other resources; and the development of their complementary capacities;
- Strengthened the capacity of the littoral countries of the Caspian Sea to identify and analyse together their main Caspian Sea development issues and formulate the requisite strategies to address them;

²¹ If applicable. Bali Strategic Plan (BSP) https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/GC23_6_add_1.pdf

²² https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/GC23_6_add_1.pdf

- Increased the quantity and enhance the quality of international development cooperation of the littoral countries of the Caspian Sea and improve the effectiveness of the resources devoted to such cooperation;
- Created and strengthen existing technological capacities in the littoral countries of the Caspian Sea and to absorb and adapt technology and skills to meet developmental needs of the Caspian Sea.
- Increased and improve communications among the littoral countries of the Caspian Sea, leading to a greater awareness of common problems and wider access to available knowledge and experience of the Caspian Sea.

93. The results of the evaluation of the project's alignment with the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities under which the project was approved and include, in its narrative, reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results, reflects a Satisfactory assessment.

4.1.2 Alignment to Donor Strategic Priorities

94. Given the long history of this work, it is challenging to align the implementation timeframe with specific donor priorities. However, as the work supports the Tehran Convention, alignment is reasonably assumed.

4.1.3 Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities

95. The project's implementation strategies and delivered contributions (results) show:
- Full Alignment (i.e. consistency) with global, regional, sub-regional and /or national environmental priorities, as is proved in Table 09.
 - But no anticipated Identifiable contribution to global, regional, sub-regional and/or national environmental results' indicator(s).

Table 9: Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities

Country	Strategic document or agreement / Alignment with global, regional, sub-regional, national environmental priorities	Level of Alignment
Azerbaijan (AZ)	1. Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan: Establishes state ownership of natural resources (including those on the seabed of the Caspian Sea). 2. Law on Protection of the Environment (1999): Sets national environmental standards for maritime activities, consistent with the Tehran Convention. Requires Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for offshore oil and gas projects. 3. Maritime Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2001): Establishes regulations on navigation, shipping safety, port operations, and maritime zones. Defines Azerbaijan's jurisdiction over its internal waters, territorial sea, and exclusive sector in the Caspian Sea. Ensures compliance with international maritime standards adapted to the Caspian Sea special status. 4. Law on Fisheries (2013): Governs the use and conservation of aquatic biological resources in the Caspian Sea. Includes licensing procedures, quotas, and measures to combat illegal fishing. 5. Law on the Protection of the Atmospheric Air (2001) and Law on Waste (1998): Regulate emissions and waste disposal from offshore drilling and port operations. Complement	Full alignment

Country	Strategic document or agreement / Alignment with global, regional, sub-regional, national environmental priorities	Level of Alignment
	Caspian-wide commitments to pollution control under the Tehran Convention. 6. Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development (adopted 2021): Emphasizes environmental protection and integration into regional trade networks. 7. Energy Strategy of Azerbaijan (updated 2022): Prioritizes efficient use of Caspian hydrocarbon resources and diversification of export routes.	
Islamic Republic of Iran (IR-I)	1. Law on Protection of the Sea and Navigable Rivers against Oil Pollution (2010): - This national Iranian law covers the Caspian Sea, Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman, and all navigable rivers. - Ships, tankers, vessels must be insured for oil pollution damage. If pollution occurs, the shipmaster must inform local authorities. 2. Water Pollution Law: Under this, establishments producing wastewater/effluents must treat them prior to disposal. The Department of Environment sets standards. 3. Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act: Broader law under which Iran's Department of Environment establishes environmental standards, approves regulations, enforces compliance, etc. 4. Standards for industrial discharge, water quality: Iran has national standards (for effluent discharge, water quality, air quality) that apply generally but also in coastal/marine contexts including the Caspian. 5. Law on Approving the Amendments to the Annexes to the International Treaty (Convention) for the Prevention of Sea Pollution from Ships (1973) (MARPOL 1973/78): Implemented in 2025. This strengthens obligations on marine pollution from ships, which would cover Caspian Sea as well. 6. Monitoring programs: Iran has designed comprehensive marine environment monitoring inclusive of Caspian Sea waters, sediments, biota for pollutants like heavy metals, microplastics etc.	Full alignment
Kazakhstan (KZ)	1. Caspian Sea Regional Cooperation on Emergency Situations: Kazakhstan has signed agreements on mutual assistance in the event of oil spills, pollution, and disasters that affect the Caspian Sea. 1. Kazakhstan's National Legislation on Environmental Protection: Implemented national environmental laws to manage the Caspian Sea's resources. These laws cover areas of water resources management, by monitoring water quality (pollution limits) and ensuring sustainable use of the Caspian's resources in its maritime zones. 3. Wildlife and biodiversity protection: Laws protecting endangered species in the Caspian Sea, such as the Caspian seal and sturgeon. The creation of protected areas and nature reserves, including a Caspian Sea seal sanctuary, reflects these commitments. 4. The Caspian Sea Fisheries Organization (CSFO): An organization formed by the Caspian states to jointly manage fisheries and enforce regulations against illegal fishing. Kazakhstan plays a role in setting fishing quotas, ensuring sustainable harvests, and protecting fish breeding grounds, particularly in managing sturgeon populations. 5. International Maritime Law: As a member of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Kazakhstan complies with international maritime laws governing safe shipping practices, marine environmental protection, and the prevention of marine pollution. Kazakhstan's legislation on shipping and navigation aligns with IMO standards, which are particularly important as the Caspian Sea becomes an increasingly significant transit hub for goods.	Full alignment

Country	Strategic document or agreement / Alignment with global, regional, sub-regional, national environmental priorities	Level of Alignment
Russian Federation (RF)	1. Law on the Continental Shelf (1995): This law outlines Russia's jurisdiction over the Caspian continental shelf and its exclusive rights to the development of mineral resources there. Russia has strong legal rights to oil and gas exploration in its designated sectors under this law. 2. Environmental Protection Laws: Russia's Environmental Code and specific regulations on water bodies (e.g., the Water Code) apply to the Caspian Sea. Russia has obligations under the Caspian Environmental Program (CEP), a multilateral initiative aimed at protecting the sea's fragile ecosystem. These regulations govern pollution, resource extraction, and conservation efforts. 3. Federal Law on Fishing (2004): This law regulates fisheries in the Caspian Sea, with specific attention to sturgeon populations (important for caviar production) and other fish species. It helps manage fishing quotas, regulate the fishing industry, and prevent overexploitation. 4. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (Indirect Influence): While the Caspian Sea is not subject to the full scope of UNCLOS due to its unique legal status, Russia still follows many of its principles, particularly those related to marine environmental protection, fishing, and freedom of navigation in the parts of the Caspian Sea where it has jurisdiction.	Full alignment
Turkmenistan (TK)	1. Law "On Nature Protection": Fundamental national law defining environmental safety, regulating harmful impacts of economic activity, protection and rational use of natural resources, conservation of biological diversity; includes specific provisions for Caspian Sea sector (protection of marine and coastal zones, control of pollution, ecological monitoring, etc.). 2. Law on State Ecological Expertise: Provides rules for environmental impact assessment (EIA), licensing, review of proposed projects for environmental risks, etc. This includes projects that affect coastal zones or the Caspian Sea sector. 3. Law on Wastes / Hazardous Wastes: Regulation of waste generation, handling, disposal; prohibition or tight control of hazardous waste dumping especially near or into water bodies including Caspian Sea sector; criteria for permits for waste disposal. 4. Laws / Regulations on Oil Spill Prevention, Marine Transport, and Safety, National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Oil Spills & Protection of Coastal Waters from Pollution from Ships: Requirements for oil & gas operators in the marine sector to prevent, report, and respond to oil spills; environmental obligations in petroleum operations in Caspian sector; regulation of maritime vessels and their discharges, etc. 5. Environmental Monitoring & State Supervision: Monitoring of sea water quality (surface and bottom sediments), coastline groundwater, atmospheric air in coastal zones; oversight over both domestic and foreign entities operating in the Caspian coastal, marine sectors; and environmental audits. 6. Institutional Mechanisms & Interagency Coordination: Interdepartmental commissions (for Caspian Sea issues), specialized State bodies (e.g. State Committee for Natural Protection, Fisheries, Geology, etc.), Caspian Ecological Service, etc., among others to implement and enforce regulations; also, cooperation with ministries for oil/gas,	Full alignment
RESULT OF EVALUATION of Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities		Full alignment

96. The results of the evaluation of the project relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities is SATISFACTORY.

4.1.4 Complementarity with Existing Interventions/ Coherence

97. In this section an assessment on how well the project, either at design stage or during the project mobilization, took account of ongoing and planned initiatives that address similar needs of the same target group. The evaluation considers if the project made efforts to ensure their own intervention was complementary to other interventions, optimized any synergies, and avoided duplication of efforts. Linkages with other interventions are described in the table below (Table 10).

Table 10: Complementarity with Existing Interventions / Coherence

Other initiatives by UNEP or other organisations	Complementarity (including collaboration, coordination and overlap or duplication)	Level of Alignment
CASPCOM	Key partnership, particularly through the Scientific Conference on Climate Change in the Caspian Sea region held in October 2021. This collaboration enabled the project to tap into region-specific scientific data and foster a deeper understanding of climate dynamics in the Caspian Sea, enhancing the project's ability to develop targeted climate-resilience strategies.	<i>Full alignment</i>
"Building Climate Resilient Cities and Communities in the Republic of Azerbaijan" - UN-Habitat	Collaboration with UN-Habitat. This partnership brought in urban resilience expertise, ensuring that the project's outcomes are not only ecologically sound but also socially inclusive, directly benefiting local communities.	<i>Partial alignment</i>
"Addressing Marine Litter and Marine Plastics – A Systemic Approach in the Caspian Sea" – UNEP & UNDP	Project UNEP and UNDP consolidate efforts to deliver key outcomes, such as the collection and analysis of marine litter data from all Caspian littoral states, improvements in waste management policies, and the promotion of investments in waste management infrastructure. This partnership not only enhances policy coherence but also ensures the integration of best practices and lessons learned from similar initiatives in the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea regions, strengthening regional cooperation and promoting synergies with the Bucharest and Barcelona Conventions.	<i>Full alignment</i>
RESULT OF EVALUATION of Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence		FULL ALIGNMENT

Source: Operational Project Closure Report, 2025.

98. These partnerships significantly contributed to the project's success by bringing diverse expertise, resources, and perspectives, creating a robust foundation for lasting environmental resilience in the region. Given the strategic importance and mutual benefits of these collaborations, there is strong potential for these partnerships to continue beyond the project's lifecycle, ensuring the sustained impact of the initiatives launched under the Tehran Convention framework.

Findings Statements on Strategic Relevance and Complementarity

99. The project's intervention design/adjustments during inception show full complementarity of results (but no duplication) to other recent, ongoing or planned interventions by UNEP or other organisations working in the project area or on the same problem/issue. Additionally:

- Active knowledge of, or dialogue/engagement with, other recent, ongoing or planned interventions by UNEP or other organisations working in the project area or on the same problem/issue.
- BUT the design does not anticipate any identified benefits to collaboration with other recent, ongoing or planned interventions by UNEP or other organisations working in the project area or on the same problem/issue.

100. The results of the evaluation of the project's alignment with Complementarity with Existing Interventions / Coherence, reflects a **SATISFACTORY** assessment.

101. The overall Rating for the Project's Strategic Relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project implementation 2015-2023 is **SATISFACTORY**.

Rating for Strategic Relevance: SATISFACTORY

Rating for Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities: SATISFACTORY

Rating for Alignment to Donor Strategic Priorities:

Rating for Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities: SATISFACTORY

Rating for Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence: SATISFACTORY

4.2 Quality of Project Design

102. The quality of project design is assessed using an agreed template during the evaluation inception phase, ratings are attributed to identified criteria and an overall Project Design Quality (PDQ) rating is established using a weighted approach.

103. The Table 11. Summary of Project Design Quality (PDQ) Score, shows the calculation and the final score of the Project. The overall score is of 3.52 which means Moderately Satisfactory.

Table 11: Summary of project design quality (PDQ) assessment ratings

Section		Rating ²³	Weighting	Total
A	Operating Context	2	0.4	0.08
B	Project Preparation	3	1.2	0.36
C	Strategic Relevance	5	0.8	0.4
D	Intended Results and Causality	3	1.6	0.48
E	Logical Framework and Monitoring	4	0.8	0.32
F	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	5	0.4	0.2
G	Partnerships	5	0.8	0.4
H	Learning, Communication and Outreach	5	0.4	0.2
I	Financial Planning / Budgeting	4	0.4	0.16
J	Efficiency	4	0.8	0.32
K	Risk identification and Social Safeguards	3	0.8	0.24
L	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	3	1.2	0.36
M	Identified Project Design Weaknesses / Gaps	0	0.4	0.00
Total Weighted Score			3.52	

²³ Rating scores: 6=highly satisfactory, 5=satisfactory, 4=moderately satisfactory, 3=moderately unsatisfactory, 2=unsatisfactory, 1=highly unsatisfactory, 0=not applicable

SECTION	RATING (1-6) ²⁴	Summary Assessment
A Operating Context	2 - Unsatisfactory	The project document did not identify any unusually challenging operational factors that are likely to negatively affect project performance, neither likelihood of conflict, natural disaster nor change in national government.
B Project Preparation	3 - Moderately unsatisfactory	The project document (2008) presented in Section 1.8-Project Summary and in Section 2.-Project Background, entail clear and adequate the problem and the analysis of the situation.
		The project document did not include a clear and adequate stakeholder analysis, including by gender/minority groupings or indigenous peoples. It was not a requirement at the time of the project design phase. However, in section 3-Proposal of the ProDoc, article 3.2-Project impacts on poverty alleviation and gender equality, was mentioned that "The measure in which the work of the interim Secretariat contributes to poverty alleviation and gender equality is dependent of the guidance provided by the COP".
		The project document did not provide a description of stakeholder consultation/participation during project design process.
C Strategic Relevance	5 - Satisfactory	The project document did not identify concerns with respect human rights, gender perspectives, or indigenous people, but it concerns about sustainable development of The Caspian Sea. It was not a requirement at the time of the project design phase.
		The Project Revision #24 of 2021, stated that the project was under UNEP Subprogramme of Environmental Governance and it was aligned with the Outcome 1A: Decision-makers at all levels adopt decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways. Outcome 2A: An economically and socially sustainable pathway for halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity is established. Outcome 3B: Waste management is improved, including through circular processes, safe recovery of secondary raw materials and progressive reduction of open burning and dump sites. Outcome 2C: Nature conservation and restoration are enhanced. Outcome 3C: Releases of pollutants to air, water, soil and the ocean are reduced.
		The Project Revision#24 of 2021 mentioned that the priority was to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goal SDG 14: Life Below Water, aligned to GEF/Donor strategic priorities. The Project Revision#24 of 2021 indicated the priorities is the conservation and protection of the Caspian Sea region, aligned to Regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities. The project was aligned with CASPCOM and ESPOO convention, among others.
D Intended Results and Causality	3 - Moderately unsatisfactory	The Project design developed outcomes and outputs; and also has indicators for each one. The Project design mentioned outcome milestones and outputs milestones and their attainment date for each one well. The Project succeeded in developing an updated UNEP Logical framework. There was no ToC in the project design documents. A ToC was not obligatory at the time of the project design. A reconstructed ToC is being present at Inception Evaluation Report and in this First Draft. In the last Project review #24 of 2021 there was a pathway from project outcomes to project outputs that was well done.

²⁴ Rating scores: 6=highly satisfactory, 5=satisfactory, 4=moderately satisfactory, 3=moderately unsatisfactory, 2=unsatisfactory, 1=highly unsatisfactory, 0=not applicable

SECTION	RATING (1-6) ²⁴	Summary Assessment
		The Project design did not present impact drivers and assumptions. There were no roles described, neither for stakeholders (including gendered/minority groups), not for each actor described for each key causal pathway. The Outcomes were not realistic with the timeframe of the intervention. The project took several extensions.
		The logical framework did not capture the key elements of the Theory of Change. Also, there is no ToC. The logical framework did not have 'SMART' results neither at output nor at outcome level. Some results were relevant and time-bound, but not specific enough, difficult to measure them, and not achievable in the project time. The logical framework did reflect the project's scope of work and ambitions.
E Logical Framework and Monitoring	4 - Moderately satisfactory	The Project review #24 of 2021 mentioned a baseline and target for indicators, just a number. This are almost similar with the ones in the ProDoc (2008). Yes, the desired level of achievement (targets) have been specified for indicators of outputs and outcomes in Project review #24 (2021). There was not a Monitoring Plan where milestones were indicated. The milestones are showed in Project review #24, and they were trackable and foster management of outputs and outcomes. Responsibilities for monitoring activities were not made clear. Interim secretariat helped monitoring project progress. The workplan of the Project review #24 was clear, but neither adequate to the region nor realistic.
F Governance and Supervision Arrangements	5 - Satisfactory	The project governance and the supervision model were comprehensive, clear and appropriate for the project. It was well defined the role of UNEP/ROE in the project.
G Partnerships	5 - Satisfactory	At project design there were not partners mentioned. There has been some partnership with other projects when the project was already active as: CASPCOM and ESPOO convention, among others. There were not any roles and responsibilities of external partners specified.
H Learning, Communication and Outreach	5 - Satisfactory	The Project did have an adequate knowledge management approach, such as "Civil Society Engagement, Astrakhan Statement and Recommendations, Caspian Day Forum". The project has identified appropriate methods for communication with stakeholders. Example: Caspian Sea day. No, the project has not included gendered/minority groups as a specific target. The Project did plan to develop a website where they share lessons of the Tehran Convention since some years ago. Tehran Convention provides for the development of the "Caspian Environmental information Center (CEIC), a centralised database and information management system to function as a repository of relevant data, serve as the basis for decision-making and as a general source of information and education for specialists, administrators, and the public at large.
I Financial Planning / Budgeting	4 - Moderately satisfactory	Budgets and financial planning were adequate at design stage, but the project has been extended several years onwards that the funds are reduced over the years. The expectations were not over-ambitious, but the delivery of the project outcomes has taken more time than planned, what has led to repeated cost extensions.
J Efficiency	4 - Moderately satisfactory	The project was designed for a specific amount of time with a secured funding, but in practice the project has taken several

SECTION	RATING (1-6) ²⁴	Summary Assessment
		extensions and funding has been not secured the last years like in the beginning. The project design and funding were part of the project GEF CASPECO. In 2022, the COP6.9 took place and "Ongoing project preparations and other possibilities for cooperation" were discussed. Some potential cooperation was with: 1) Official Development Assistance of the Russian Federation; 2) Adaptation Fund and 3) Commission for the Conservation and Rational Use of Aquatic Biological Resources and Management of Shared Stocks of such Resources. The project document itself was looking for cooperation and funding. Also, in review meetings and COPs, there were budget documents well elaborated that are discussed. The project has been extended beyond its original end date. The main reason for delays is the ownership and establishment of the Tehran Convention Secretariat in the Caspian Region; countries don't get to an agreement.
K Risk identification and Social Safeguards	3 - Moderately unsatisfactory	The project has not identified risks. Potentially negative environmental impacts of the project are known and written in the documents. The project did not have a mitigation strategy. The potential economic and social impacts of the project have not been established. The project has not an adequate mechanism to reduce its negative environmental foot-print. But the project itself aims for marine conservation which reduce GHS emissions to environment.
L Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	3 - Moderately unsatisfactory	The design of the project addressed the financial issue. The Project design did not mention socio-political, institutional and/or environmental sustainability issues. There was no sustainability strategy and/or appropriate exit strategy at design stage. The project design did not present strategies to promote/support scaling up, replication and/or catalytic action, but the following Project revisions over the years presented some strategies.
M Identified Project Design Weaknesses / Gaps	0	There are not any critical issues raised by PRC. Critical issues not flagged are: Political situation of the countries, language and risks (in any kind).
Total (Weighted) Score:	3.52	MODERATELY SATISFACTORY

104. Substantive and/or significant strengths are apparent at the project design stage, including:

- The Project design developed outcomes and outputs; and also has indicators for each one.
- The Project design mentioned outcome milestones and outputs milestones and their attainment date for each one well.
- The Project succeeded in developing an updated UNEP Logical framework.
- The five Caspian littoral states established institutional ownership of the Tehran Convention.
- The development of legal instruments for collaboration on identified environmental priority areas of concern by Caspian Countries was partially achieved.
- Resources Mobilization measures were partially carried out.

- Four Protocols were planned, designed and accepted in the project design: Aktau Protocol concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents (adopted and signed at COP-3 in Aktau, Kazakhstan on August 12, 2011); Moscow Protocol on the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land based Sources and Activities (adopted at COP-4 in Moscow, December 12, 2012); Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Trans-Boundary Context (adopted at COP-4 in Moscow on December 12, 2012); and Ashgabat Protocol on the Conservation of Biological Diversity (adopted and signed at COP-5 in May 30, 2014).

105. Substantive and/or significant weaknesses are apparent at the project design stage, like:

- There was neither a Theory of Change (TOC) nor a Monitoring Plan in the project design documents. It is important to acknowledge that a TOC was not mandatory until 2011.
- The project document did not identify any potentially challenging operational factors that could likely negatively affect the project performance, such as: likelihood of conflict, natural disaster or political upheaval.
- The potential economic and social impacts of the project have not been established.
- The project did not identify risks, and did not have a mitigation strategy.

Rating for Project Design Quality (PDQ): 3.52 MODERATELY SATISFACTORY
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4.3 Nature of the External Context

106. This section summarised any key external and unanticipated features of the project's implementing context that may have limited the project's performance. The overall effects of unfavourable external events on the project's performance that have occurred and affected the project from 2015 to 2023 are described.

107. The project revision #24 (2021) mentioned that among all the implementation challenges, COVID-19 pandemic affected project implementation by bringing delays in negotiations between the Caspian littoral countries on the arrangement for the Tehran Convention Secretariat. It should be remembered there was travel restrictions around the world.

108. The implemented attempts to overcome the stalemate were made via online meetings. However, no progress was made as the countries insisted on physical meetings to continue the negotiations on the secretariat arrangement²⁵. Additionally, the project revision #24 also recommended:

- The extension of the duration of the project until 31 December 2023;
- The placement of the unspent 2021 balance of US\$ 242,878 to the year 2022;
- The alignment of 2021 and 2022-2023 project budget with expenditures and project needs.
- The amending of the budget Summary, results achieved, logical framework and Project Budget of the previously approved Project Revision document.

²⁵ Project revision document number 24

109. The actions taken to address the main implementation challenges (including operational ones) and management decisions made to increase the effectiveness of the project are described in the table below (Table 12).

Table 12: Challenges encountered and actions taken ²⁶

Challenge Encountered	Action Taken
Covid-19 pandemic coupled with travel restrictions led to inability of in-person meetings and discussions.	Wider use of opportunities for online and hybrid meetings using digital platforms like Zoom, Teams, etc.
Restrictions in bank transfers from Iran led to delays in countries' contributions payments.	Budget rebalancing and search for enabling procedures to receive money transfers.
Political factors beyond the project scope affecting the implementation of previously taken decisions by several countries.	Facilitation of discussion to find new compromises while supporting the implementation of activities as feasible on a certain stage.

110. After using the Evaluation Matrix, it is concluded that the project section of "Nature of External Context", is ranked as Unfavourable, because "Security situation temporarily affected project staff and partners operations to a significant extent".

Rating for Nature of the External Context: UNFAVOURABLE

²⁶ Project revision document #24 (2021)

4.4 Effectiveness

111. This section provides an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathway represented by the reconstructed Theory of Change (TOC) at Evaluation, of all evidence relating to the achievement of results. Effectiveness is assessed against the three sub-criteria of: a) Availability of Outputs, b) Achievement of Outcomes and c) Likelihood of Impact.

4.4.1 Availability of Outputs,

112. This evaluation section assesses the project's success in producing the programmed outputs and achieving milestones as per the project design document (ProDoc) and project Revisions documents (# 19 to # 24). Any formal modifications/revisions made during project implementation are considered part of the project design. The project outputs were minimally reformulated in the reconstructed TOC. Section 3, at Table 7 - Justification for reformulation of results statements, shows the original outputs and the reformulation of the outputs for transparency.

113. The availability of outputs is assessed in terms of both quantity and quality. The assessment considers the ownership by, and usefulness to, intended beneficiaries (the Caspian littoral countries) and the timeliness of their provision. Emphasis is placed on the performance of those outputs that are most important to achieve outcomes. The Evaluation explains the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards. Performance is primarily based on the availability of programmed outputs.

Table 13: Availability of outputs

	NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT <i>Discuss the nature and scale of outputs delivered, as well timeliness, quality, and utility to intended beneficiaries</i>	SOURCES OF INFORMATION / EVIDENCE <i>List specific sources of information for each output and its indicator/s and mention triangulation efforts</i>
1. OUTPUT A: - Facilitation of the negotiation process towards reaching an agreement on the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat of the Tehran Convention and on ancillary Protocols.	<u>Quantitative indicators:</u> - 7 finalized agreements: - Kazakhstan ratified 3 protocols. - Iran ratified the Ashgabat Protocol. - Russia ratified the Moscow Protocol. - Moscow Protocol entered into force.	▪ Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. • Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 to # 24).

	NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT <i>Discuss the nature and scale of outputs delivered, as well timeliness, quality, and utility to intended beneficiaries</i>	SOURCES OF INFORMATION / EVIDENCE <i>List specific sources of information for each output and its indicator/s and mention triangulation efforts</i>
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s) <u>Indicator:</u> Number of agreements finalized. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 5 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 7	- Following the Caspian Ministerial Consultations in September 2023 the ad hoc Expert Group on the arrangements of the Secretariat of the Convention is established. The Group held its first meeting in December 2023. - Meetings on the negotiation on the Protocols on Environmental Monitoring held in 2022 and 2003. - Discussions on the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat in the Caspian region held in 2022 and 2023. Indicator = Achieved <u>Quality Assessment:</u> • All (100%) of programmed measures, meaning the ancillary protocols, are available to the intended beneficiaries, which are the Caspian Littoral Countries. • The most important documents of Output A were made available to the intended country beneficiaries on time and they fulfilled their intended use, by ratified them. • The delivered documents to achieve this Output A were deemed to be of good quality / utility by users and reviewers. • Acceptable levels of user ownership - intended users of key outputs somewhat involved in / party to their preparation OUTPUT A = FULLY DELIVERED	• Validated consistently through interviews.
2. OUTPUT B: - Conference of the Parties (COP) organized and facilitated. - Support the Secretariat to become operational.	<u>Quantitative indicators:</u> - Six meetings of the Conference of the Parties took place during project life. - The Sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP6) held in Baku in 2022, after several PrepComs to COP6 (eight in total). - The discussions on the Permanent TC Secretariat arrangements are regularly held within the ad hoc Expert Group. - All milestones regarding the Convention Secretariat, meaning the M5, M6 M11 and M13, that mentions the inauguration of the Convention Secretariat and Secretariat fully equipped and operational has not taken place.	• Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. • Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24). • Validated consistently through interviews.

	NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT <i>Discuss the nature and scale of outputs delivered, as well timeliness, quality, and utility to intended beneficiaries</i>	SOURCES OF INFORMATION / EVIDENCE <i>List specific sources of information for each output and its indicator/s and mention triangulation efforts</i>
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s) <u>Indicator a:</u> Host country agreement signed. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 0 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 2 <u>Indicator b:</u> Staff contracted for Secretariat in place. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 3 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 3	- Project documents mention the preparations are underway for the Seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 7). Indicator a = Not Achieved because No Agreement for a Secretariat signed. Indicator b = Achieved (Staff of the Interim Secretariat in place) <u>Quality Assessment:</u> • 61 - 80% of the programmed COPs was held and with available results, to the intended country beneficiaries. • Support Secretariat to become operational, the most important output was deemed to be of good quality / utility by users and reviewers. • Acceptable levels of user ownership - intended users of key outputs somewhat involved in / party to their preparation. • However, the most important indicator of this output, an agreement for hosting the secretariat, was initially available to the intended beneficiaries/users on time but was then paused and, at the time of this evaluation, an agreement was not in place. • The Interim Secretariat has supported the process that a secretariat in the region becomes operational. OUTPUT B = PARTIALLY DELIVERED	• Ministerial Meetings 2023 • COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19 • PrepComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8
3. OUTPUT C: - Engagement of the private sector in the Convention intensified to help mobilize resources. Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s) <u>Indicator a:</u>	Quantitative indicators: - In the PrepCom a strategy paper for attracting and engaging private sector, in particular the oil, gas and transport industry in the implementation of the Tehran Convention was introduced. The paper was reviewed and recommendations were made by the second PrepCom/COP6. - Private sector representatives participating in the implementation meetings under the Akatau Protocol. - Engagement with private sector actors in the Convention process intensified resource mobilization efforts, providing businesses with a platform to contribute to environmental solutions.	• Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. • Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24). • Validated consistently through interviews. • Ministerial Meetings 2023

	NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT <i>Discuss the nature and scale of outputs delivered, as well timeliness, quality, and utility to intended beneficiaries</i>	SOURCES OF INFORMATION / EVIDENCE <i>List specific sources of information for each output and its indicator/s and mention triangulation efforts</i>
Private sector companies participating in Convention meetings. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 8 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 9 <u>Indicator b:</u> Project proposals for private sector engagement developed. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 2 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 4	- Full-fledged project proposal "Urbanization and Climate Change in the Caspian Sea Region" divided into 2 separates single -country projects. - The Azerbaijan project "Building Climate Resilient Cities and Communities in the Republic of Azerbaijan" is fully developed and approved. - The GEF 8 project "Blueing the Caspian Sea" co -implemented with World Bank is under elaboration. Indicator a = Achieved Indicator b = Achieved (2 Projects). <u>Quality Assessment:</u> • 81-99% of the programmed outputs are available to the intended beneficiaries/users. • The Output C was achieved as private sector companies participated in Convention meetings. • Nearly all the delivered project proposals were deemed to be of very good quality / utility by users and reviewers. • Good levels of user ownership - intended users of key outputs, especially in projects, meaningfully involved in / party to their preparation. OUTPUT C = FULLY DELIVERED	• COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19 • PrepComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8
4. OUTPUT D: - The Interim Secretariat facilitates adaptation and implementation of National Convention Action Plans- NCAP in each of the Caspian littoral countries. Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	<u>Quantitative indicators:</u> - A ToR for an international consultant for the new NCAP elaboration are approved; the process of selection of a consultant in underway. - National Convention Action Plans-NCAP developed, one in each of the Caspian littoral countries. Indicator a = Partially Achieved Indicator b = Not Achieved <u>Quality Assessment:</u>	• Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. • Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24). • Validated consistently through interviews. • Ministerial Meetings 2023

	NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT <i>Discuss the nature and scale of outputs delivered, as well timeliness, quality, and utility to intended beneficiaries</i>	SOURCES OF INFORMATION / EVIDENCE <i>List specific sources of information for each output and its indicator/s and mention triangulation efforts</i>
<u>Indicator a:</u> Number of NCAP reports developed. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 4 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 5 <u>Indicator b:</u> Analysis paper on implementation produced. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 0 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 1	• The Interim Secretariat facilitates the adaptation of the majority NCAP for their intended use; but implementation has not taken place yet. • The delivered NCAP were deemed to be of good quality / utility by users and reviewers. • Acceptable levels of user ownership - intended users. Users of NCAP somewhat involved in / party to their preparation. • 81-99% of the programmed outputs, NCAP in each Caspian littoral country, are available to the intended beneficiaries/users. • However, neither the implementation of National Convention Action Plans-NCAP in none of the Caspian littoral countries has been held nor the analysis paper of its implementation. OUTPUT D = PARTIALLY DELIVERED	• COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19 • PrepComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8
5. OUTPUT E: - The Interim Secretariat facilitates the agreement on Environmental Monitoring Programme (EMP) Action Plan on the Caspian region. Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s) <u>Indicator:</u> Number of intergovernmental meetings on EMP. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 0 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 3	<u>Quantitative indicators:</u> - The Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (WGMA) is endorsed by COP6 in 2022. - The WGMA meetings are regularly held. - In 2012 was introduced the Environmental Monitoring Programme (EMP). The lack of its implementation highlighted the challenges of coordinating environmental efforts among the Caspian littoral states. A renewed commitment from the states led to the development a simplified version of EMP. - The countries agreed on elaboration of the new EMP, which takes into account the existing monitoring capabilities of the Caspian littoral states, making it more feasible for implementation. Indicator = Partially Achieved <u>Quality Assessment:</u> • 61 - 80% of the programmed output are available to the intended beneficiaries/users. Meaning that most of the intergovernmental meetings on EMP are attended by members of the WGMA.	• Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. • Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24). • Validated consistently through interviews. • Ministerial Meetings 2023 • COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19 • PrepComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8

	NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT <i>Discuss the nature and scale of outputs delivered, as well timeliness, quality, and utility to intended beneficiaries</i>	SOURCES OF INFORMATION / EVIDENCE <i>List specific sources of information for each output and its indicator/s and mention triangulation efforts</i>
	• The deliverables of the first EMP were deemed to be of good quality / utility by users and reviewers, but a lack of implementation highlighted the need for a revision/new version. • Acceptable levels of user ownership - intended users. Users of ERM somewhat involved in / party to it preparation. • The Interim Secretariat facilitates the intergovernmental meetings on EMP Action Plan on the Caspian region were made available to the intended beneficiaries/users on time and they fulfilled their intended use; but an agreement on EMP has not taken place yet. OUTPUT E = PARTIALLY DELIVERED	
6. OUTPUT F: - Public awareness campaign organized on the Tehran Convention process and its practical implications for the public at large. Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s) <u>Indicator:</u> Awareness raising events held. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 0 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 5	<u>Quantitative indicators:</u> - Regional NGOs has gained strategic knowledge on mobilizing public opinion around biodiversity and pollution issues, which they are now using to advocate for more sustainable national policies. - Awareness campaigns organized on the Tehran Convention included these activities: public campaigns, scientific conferences and other events, raising awareness among children and youth, clean-up campaigns in coastal zones. Indicator = Achieved <u>Quality Assessment:</u> • 81-99% of the programmed measures for Output F is available to the intended beneficiaries/users. • The most important activities to achieve output were made available to the intended beneficiaries/users in time to allow high levels of awareness. • Nearly all the delivered activities, including the most important to achieve output F were deemed to be of very good quality / utility by users and reviewers. • Good levels of user ownership - intended users of key outputs meaningfully involved in / party to the preparation of public awareness. OUTPUT F = FULLY DELIVERED	• Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. • Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24). • Validated consistently through interviews. • Ministerial Meetings 2023 • COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19 • PrepComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8

	NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT <i>Discuss the nature and scale of outputs delivered, as well timeliness, quality, and utility to intended beneficiaries</i>	SOURCES OF INFORMATION / EVIDENCE <i>List specific sources of information for each output and its indicator/s and mention triangulation efforts</i>
7. OUTPUT G - Caspian Environment Information Center (CEIC) updated as a tool for web-based environment data collection, sharing, monitoring, analysis, harmonization and public communication. Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s) <u>Indicator:</u> ----- <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 3 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 4	Indicator = Not Achieved <u>Quality indicators:</u> - This output was eliminated in the transition of Project revision#19 of 2016 and Project revision #20 of 2017. In last Project revision #24 of 2021 no longer included. However, it is still discussed and reported on. (The assessment of this output does not affect the performance rating of Availability of Outputs). - The Caspian Environmental Information Center (CEIC) was established to ensure accessibility of data and information in the context of implementation of the Tehran Convention and its protocols for decision-makers and other stakeholders under the co-ordination by the Tehran Convention Secretariat, including the collection, storage and dissemination of information on the state of the Caspian Sea environment. - It is necessary to optimize the activities of the CEIC. OUTPUT G = PARTIALLY DELIVERED	• Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. • Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24). • Validated consistently through interviews. • Ministerial Meetings 2023 • COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19 • PrepComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8
8. OUTPUT H: - Regional priority implementation plans for the ancillary protocols developed. Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s) <u>Indicator:</u> Number of agreed implementation documents.	<u>Quantitative indicators:</u> - The Moscow Protocol entered into force in November 2023. - The first online implementation meeting under the Moscow Protocol was held. - The priority agenda on the Ashgabat Protocol and EIA Protocol is under discussion by the states. INDICATOR = PARTIALLY ACHIEVED <u>Quality Assessment:</u> • 41 - 60% of the programmed measures, development of the Regional priority implementation plans for the ancillary protocols, are available to the intended beneficiaries/users.	• Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. • Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24). • Validated consistently through interviews. • Ministerial Meetings 2023 • COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19

	NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT <i>Discuss the nature and scale of outputs delivered, as well timeliness, quality, and utility to intended beneficiaries</i>	SOURCES OF INFORMATION / EVIDENCE <i>List specific sources of information for each output and its indicator/s and mention triangulation efforts</i>
<u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 0 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 2	• The most important documents of Output G, ancillary protocols, were made available to the intended beneficiaries/users on time but they still not fulfilled their intended use, expressed in regional implementation plans. • One of the ancillary protocols was deemed to be of good quality / utility by users and reviewers, reason why it entered into force. • Acceptable levels of user ownership - intended users of one of the ancillary protocols, get involved in / party on the preparation of the implementation plan for that specific ancillary protocol. OUTPUT H = PARTIALLY DELIVERED	• PrepComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8
9. OUTPUT I: - Involvement of regional NGO network further enhanced. Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s) <u>Indicator:</u> Regional NGOs represented at COP6 / Caspian Day celebrations held. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 0 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 15	<u>Quantitative indicators:</u> - Caspian Day celebrations on and around 12 August were held in all Caspian countries in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. - Also, Caspian Sea Days activities are successfully arranged and held in 2022 and 2023 by all the five Caspian countries. - In Astrakhan, Russian Federation 2017, an upscaled Caspian Sea Day Forum was held on the occasion of the Year of the Environment in Russia. - Stakeholders included international organizations, academia, national and local NGOs, private sector, youth and children, university students, environmental activists. - The Astrakhan Stakeholder Statements and Recommendations suggested to develop a draft project to enhance stakeholder engagement and public participation in the Caspian Sea region with the support of Integral Petroleum SA (see TC/COP6/Info2). Indicator = Achieved <u>Quality Assessment:</u> • 81-99% of the programmed activities, such as Caspian Day celebrations were available to all the people of the intended beneficiaries/users' countries.	• Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. • Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24). • Validated consistently through interviews. • Ministerial Meetings 2023 • COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19 • PrepComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8

	NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT <i>Discuss the nature and scale of outputs delivered, as well timeliness, quality, and utility to intended beneficiaries</i>	SOURCES OF INFORMATION / EVIDENCE <i>List specific sources of information for each output and its indicator/s and mention triangulation efforts</i>
	• The most important activities proposals of this Output H were made available to the intended beneficiaries/users in time to obtained high levels results. • Nearly all the activities of this Output H were deemed to be of very good quality / utility by users. • Good levels of user ownership - intended users of key activities meaningfully involved in / party to their coordination, preparation and development. OUTPUT I = FULLY DELIVERED	
ASSESSMENT OF OUTPUTS		FULLY DELIVERED: Output A, C, F and H. PARTIALLY DELIVERED Output B, D, E, G, I

114. As a result of the evaluation of Availability of Outputs and accordingly with the Evaluation Criteria Rating Matrix of UNEP:
- Over 80% of the programmed outputs are available to the intended beneficiaries/users, the Caspian Sea littoral countries.
 - The most important outputs to achieve outcomes were made available to the intended beneficiaries on time and fulfilled their intended use.
 - Among the delivered outputs, the most important to achieve outcomes were deemed to be of good quality / utility by users and reviewers.
 - There were good levels of user ownership - intended users of key outputs meaningfully involved in / party to their preparation

After using the Evaluation Matrix, it is concluded that the project section of “Availability of Outputs”, is ranked as Moderately Satisfactory.

4.4.2 Achievement of Project Outcomes

115. The achievement of project outcomes is assessed as performance against the project outcomes as defined in the reconstructed Theory of Change (Section 3). These are outcomes that were intended to be achieved by the end of the project timeframe and within the project's resource envelope. Emphasis is placed on the achievement of project outcomes that are most important for attaining intermediate states (Table 14).

Table 14: Achievement of project outcomes

OUTCOME A:	Institutional ownership of the five Caspian littoral States for the Tehran Convention increased
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	<u>Indicator:</u> Number of institutional decisions / measures taken by countries to establish ownership of the Convention process in the region. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 3 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 4 <u>Performance:</u> The institutional measures adopted by countries to establish ownership of the Convention process in the region are evidenced by participation in coordination and attendance at the eight (8) preparatory meetings for COP6 held between November 2014 and September 2022 and the extraordinary meeting of the parties held in 2018, and COP6, which was finally held in October 2022. A total of 10 meetings when several institutional decisions by the Caspian littoral countries took place. All these meetings are considered for the evaluation of Outcome A Indicator. Indicator achieved
Source(s) of information/ Evidence: <i>List specific source/s of information that demonstrate the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries</i>	• Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. • Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24). • Validated consistently through interviews. • Ministerial Meetings 2023 • COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19 • PrepComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8
Narrative Assessment: <i>Discuss the nature, depth, and scale of Outcome.</i> <i>Discuss the contribution, credible association, or attribution of the Outcome level change to the project.</i>	<u>Assessment:</u> The Outcome A, Institutional ownership of the five Caspian littoral States for the Tehran Convention, increased over the years. It is reflected by the compromise in the development of: - Sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP6) held in 2022. - Establishment of the ad hoc Expert Group on the arrangements of the Secretariat of the Convention Following the Caspian Ministerial Consultations in September 2023. is established. - The First meeting of the ad hoc Expert Group held in December 2023 • Assumptions for progress from project outputs to project outcome(s) hold. <u>Assumption a of Outcome A:</u>

OUTCOME A:	Institutional ownership of the five Caspian littoral States for the Tehran Convention increased
	Willingness, among member countries of Caspian Sea region, of having a consensus decision about the establishment permanent secretariat = achieved. <u>Assumption b of Outcome A:</u> Project budget planning developed = achieved. The Driver that supports transition from project outputs to project outcome is only partially in place. <u>Driver Outcome A</u> = Transboundary Capacity – building. Some years it took place successfully and others not so much, partially held.
Level of Achievement:	OUTCOME A = PARTIALLY ACHIEVED

OUTCOME B:	Operational framework for the implementation of the Convention/ Protocols established²⁷
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	<u>Indicator:</u> Number of regional/national implementation plans substantiating the legal commitments. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 0 <u>Target:</u> 2021= 2 <u>Performance:</u> The project reports mentioned that regional/national implementation plans supporting legal commitments have been achieved. The ToR for National Convention Liaison Officers - NCLOs approved by COP6 in October 2022 are being considered as evidence for the indicator of Outcome B. Similarly, reports of the work of the National Convention Liaison Officers – NCLO are received on a regular basis. These reports of work have also been counted as part of the indicator. Indicator achieved
Source(s) of information / Evidence: <i>List specific source/s of information that demonstrate the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries</i>	- Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. - Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24). - Validated consistently through interviews. - Ministerial Meetings 2023 - COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19 - PrepComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8
Narrative Assessment: <i>Discuss the nature, depth, and scale of Outcome. Discuss the contribution, credible association, or attribution of the Outcome level change to the project.</i>	<u>Assessment:</u> - The Outcome B, Operational framework for the implementation of the Convention/ Protocols established, is being assessed by the protocols that have entry into force. These are: - Aktau Protocol entered into force in July 2016. - Moscow Protocol entered into force in November 2023. - It is also mentioned, that the Reports of work of the NCLOs were regularly received, support regional/national implementation plans.

²⁷ Aktau Protocol concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents (adopted and signed at COP-3 in Aktau, Kazakhstan on August 12, 2011); Moscow Protocol on the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land based Sources and Activities (adopted at COP-4 in Moscow, December 12, 2012); Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Trans-Boundary Context (adopted at COP-4 in Moscow on December 12, 2012); and Ashgabat Protocol on the Conservation of Biological Diversity (adopted and signed at COP-5 in May 30, 2014).

OUTCOME B:	Operational framework for the implementation of the Convention/ Protocols established²⁷
	- Moreover, discussions on the future of the Convention Secretariat are regularly held. - Assumptions for progress from project outputs to project outcome(s) hold partially, as explained below: <u>Assumption a of Outcome B:</u> Legal commitments for implementation of Convention/protocols done = Hold partially. - The Driver that supports transition from project outputs to project outcome A is only partially in place. <u>Driver Outcome B</u> = Existence of Private sector funding. This funding and arrangements are still in negotiation.
Level of Achievement:	OUTCOME B = PARTIALLY ACHIEVED

OUTCOME C:	Commitment of Caspian countries for collaborative action in the fields of biodiversity conservation, pollution from land-based sources, environmental impact assessment and oil pollution incidents increased and embedded in national legislation.
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	<u>Indicator:</u> Number of legal instruments for collaboration on identified environmental priority areas of concern by Caspian countries. <u>Baseline:</u> 2021= 2 <u>Target:</u> 2021 = 6 <u>Performance</u> For the Indicator of Outcome C the ratification and entry into force of Protocols by each country are being considered as evidence for the indicator. There have been 5 ratifications of Protocols and 1 entry into force. Indicator achieved
Source(s) of information / Evidence: <i>List specific source/s of information that demonstrate the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries</i>	- Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. - Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24). - Validated consistently through interviews. - COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19 - PrepComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8
Narrative Assessment: <i>Discuss the nature, depth, and scale of Outcome. Discuss the contribution, credible association, or attribution of the Outcome level change to the project.</i>	<u>Assessment:</u> - The Commitment of Caspian countries for collaborative action in the fields of biodiversity conservation, pollution from land-based sources, environmental impact assessment and oil pollution incidents, has being assessed by the ratification of the Protocols that treat these topics:: - Moscow Protocol ratified by Kazakhstan in November 2021 and by Russia in August 2023. - Moscow Protocol entered into force. - Ashgabat Protocol ratified by Iran and Kazakhstan in October 2021. - The EIA Protocol ratified by Kazakhstan in October 2021.

OUTCOME C:	Commitment of Caspian countries for collaborative action in the fields of biodiversity conservation, pollution from land-based sources, environmental impact assessment and oil pollution incidents increased and embedded in national legislation.
	Still other protocols are to be ratified and most of the Protocols have to completely enter into force in the 5 Caspian littoral state in the near future. - Assumptions for progress from project outputs to project outcome(s) hold partially. One out of two was held. <u>Assumption a of Outcome C:</u> Political will of governments of littoral states of Caspian Sea = Held. <u>Assumption b of Outcome C:</u> Scientific data in a comparable measurement units' system (homologate) is shared = Have not taken place. - Drivers to support transition from project outputs to project outcome(s) are = only partially in place. Just one of two drivers were held. <u>Driver a of Outcome A</u> = Engagement of NGOs. = Held. <u>Driver b of Outcome B</u> = Financial support of private sector = Not yet have taken place.
Level of Achievement:	OUTCOME C = PARTIALLY ACHIEVED

116. As a result of the Achievement of Outcomes:

- Those project outcomes that are the most important to attain intermediate states (i.e. all three), partially achieved. Other project outcomes are not/only partially achieved.
- Assumptions for progress from project outputs to project outcome(s) hold partially.
- Drivers to support transition from outputs to project outcome(s) are only partially in place.

117. After using the Evaluation Matrix, it is concluded that the project section of "Achievement of Outcomes", is ranked as Moderately Satisfactory.

4.4.3 Likelihood of Impact

118. Based on the articulation of long-lasting effects in the reconstructed Theory of Change at Evaluation (TOC at Evaluation) - i.e. from project outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact - the Evaluation assessed the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. Project objectives or goals were incorporated in the reconstructed TOC, as intermediate states or long-term impacts.

119. The evaluation provides justification for the assessment of each of the factors (e.g., achievement of Outputs/Intermediate States, and status of drivers and assumptions) that influence the likelihood of the impact statement(s) becoming a reality (Table 15).

Table 15: Likelihood of Impact

FACTORS INFLUENCING LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT	ASSESSMENT	JUSTIFICATION
Drivers to support transition from Outputs to the Project Outcomes: - Transboundary Capacity – building. - Existence of Private sector funding. - Engagement of NGOs. - Financial support of private sector.	PARTIALLY IN PLACE	• Drivers as Transboundary Capacity – building and Engagement of NGOs are in place. • Drivers as Existence of Private sector funding and Financial support of private sector are partially in place. • The overall assessment is that Drivers to support transition from Outputs to Project Outcome(s) are partially in place = MODERATELY LIKELY.
Assumptions for the change process from Outputs to Project Outcomes: - Willingness, among member countries of Caspian Sea region, of having a consensus decision about the establishment permanent secretariat. - Project budget planning developed. - Legal commitments for implementation of Convention/protocols done. - Political will of governments of littoral states of Caspian Sea. - Scientific data in a comparable measurement units' system (homologate) is shared. - Publicity of activities and release of results of the Tehran Convention are intensified, gains momentum.	PARTIALLY HOLD	• Most of the Assumptions are holding, except for the assumption "Scientific data in a comparable measurement units' system (homologate) is shared". • The assessment gave us that Assumptions progress from Project Outputs to Project Outcome(s) hold = LIKELY
Proportion of Project Outcomes fully or partially achieved	SOME	1/3 = OUTCOME A = FULLY ACHIEVED 2/3 = OUTCOME B = PARTIALLY ACHIEVED OUTCOME C = PARTIALLY ACHIEVED
Drivers to support transition from Project Outcomes to Intermediate States: - Recognition of the importance of sustainable management and protection of the Caspian Sea. - Environmental and Economic priorities	PARTIALLY IN PLACE	• Outcomes A has been fully achieved, and Outcome B and C have been partially achieved, two of three that are the most important. MODERATELY LIKELY • Three of the Drivers that support transition from Project Outcomes to Intermediate states are in place: - Recognition of the importance of sustainable management and protection of the Caspian Sea.

FACTORS INFLUENCING LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT	ASSESSMENT	JUSTIFICATION
balanced by each littoral state. - Parties increased contributions regularly. - Scientific research developed in all Caspian region by universities or institutes. - Existing platforms where civil and private society discuss about different topics concerning Caspian Sea.		- Scientific research developed in all Caspian region by universities or institutes. - Environmental and Economic priorities balanced by each littoral state. • One of the drivers that support transition from Project Outcomes to Intermediate states is partially in place, <i>Existing platforms where civil and private society discuss about different topics concerning Caspian Sea</i>, and one is not in place, <i>Parties increased contributions regularly</i>. • The Drivers evaluation to support transition from Project Outcomes to Project Intermediate State(s) are only partially in place = LIKELY.
Assumptions for the change process from the Project Outcomes to Intermediate States: - Existence of an Engagement of governments of Caspian Sea littoral states. - Resource mobilization measures carried out by each littoral state, budget allocation. - Country financial contributions established. - Implementation plans in place. - Increase of scientific evidence in environmental and climate topics. - Civil and private society are invited and they participated in all workshops, meetings, activities and celebrations the Tehran Convention organized.	PARTIALLY HOLD	• Half of the Assumptions are hold. These are: - Existence of an Engagement of governments of Caspian Sea littoral states. - Resource mobilization measures carried out by each littoral state, budget allocation. - Country financial contributions established. • Half of the Assumptions are partially hold, but assumptions aimed to full compliance in a short term: - Implementation plans in place. - Increase of scientific evidence in environmental and climate topics. - Civil and private society are invited and they participated in all workshops, meetings, activities and celebrations the Tehran Convention organized. • <u>The overall assessment of Assumptions for the change process from Project Outcomes to Project Intermediate State(s) do hold. LIKELY</u>
Proportion of Intermediate States achieved	SOME	• <u>3/5 of Intermediate States ACHIEVED:</u> - Intermediate state # 1: Governmental ownership of Caspian Sea by littoral states. - Intermediate state # 2: Secured funding and budget for the TC exists. - Intermediate state # 5: Civil and private society is involved in the Tehran Convention. • <u>2/5 of Intermediate State PARTIALLY ACHIEVED:</u> - <u>Intermediate state # 3:</u> Successful implementation of the Tehran Convention and protocols. - <u>Intermediate state # 4:</u> Scientific evidence for environmental and climate topics established.

FACTORS INFLUENCING LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT	ASSESSMENT	JUSTIFICATION
Drivers to support transition from Intermediate States to Impact: - The 5 littoral countries continue to commit to contributing to the management and protection of Caspian Sea. - Existence of funding for the second phase of the project.	PARTIALLY IN PLACE	- During last years some of the countries are being ratifying the Protocols and willing to continue with the management and protection activities, what leads to one of the drivers "The 5 littoral countries continue to commit to contributing to the management and protection of Caspian Sea". - Even some documents referred to a possibility of a second phase of the project, no proven document have been reviewed. - Drivers to support transition from Intermediate States to Project Impact are partially in place. LIKELY
Assumptions for the change process from Intermediate States to Impact: - High level national and international political support. - Human rights and gender equality are included.	PARTIALLY HOLD	- From the documentation retrieval and the interviews carried out for this evaluation, it can be said that it exists national and international political support for the project. - From the document review of project design and implementation human rights and gender equality should be included in future activities. - Assumptions for the change process from Intermediate State(s) to Impact partially do not hold. MODERATELY LIKELY
ASSESSMENT	LIKELY	

Findings Statements on Effectiveness

120. As a result of the Likelihood of Impact:

- Those project outcomes that are the most important to attain intermediate states, partially achieved.
- Assumptions for progress from project outputs to project outcome(s) hold partially.
- Drivers to support transition from outputs to project outcome(s) are only partially in place.

AND, in addition:

- Some intermediate state(s) partially achieved.
- Assumptions for the change process from intermediate state(s) to impact hold partially.
- Drivers to support transition from intermediate state(s) to impact are partially in place.

121. After using the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix, it is concluded that the project section of "Likelihood of Impact", is ranked as Likely.

Rating for Effectiveness:	MODERATELY SATISFACTORY
<i>Rating for Availability of Outputs:</i>	<i>MODERATELY SATISFACTORY</i>
<i>Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes:</i>	<i>MODERATELY SATISFACTORY</i>
<i>Rating for Achievement of Likelihood of Impact (Use 'Likely' scale):</i>	<i>LIKELY</i>

4.5 Financial Management

122. Financial management is assessed under two themes: a) adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures and b) completeness of financial information.

4.5.1 Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

123. The Evaluation looks at the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UNEP's financial management policies, procedures and/or rules.

124. In 2014 The Trust Fund was established and in 2016 was operational. The budget was meant to be reflected in the 2017-2018 Program of work (PoW). The Financial Rules for the Administration of the Trust Fund for the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea were established. These rules stipulated that the Trust Fund shall be used for funding the administration of the Convention, including the functioning of the Secretariat; that minimum the Trust Fund shall be financed from "Contributions made by the Parties" (in United States dollars or its equivalent in a convertible currency during the first quarter of the calendar year) and would be used for the functioning of the Convention Secretariat.

125. Project Revisions over the years between 2015-2023 had taken place. These Project Revisions contain regular analysis of actual expenditure against budget and workplan. These reports have been presented approximately every 6-monthly during those years.

In these Project Revision there was a part referring to Budget Summary. This Budget Summary explained the cash contributions, which where the following:

- Previously approved planned budget
- Previously secured budget
- Total Change of secured budget
- Total revised secured budget
- Unsecured budget
- New total for proposed planned budget
- In-kind Contribution information is also available.

126. Moreover, the project had expenditures recorded in IMIS & UNJA M1 32CPL, which are proof that the project followed UNEP's procedures and requirements.

127. The project's adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures using the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix, meet the following statements with evidence but not all, of the time:

- Regular analysis of actual expenditure against budget and workplan. There have been Programme of Work and Budget (2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2023-2024).
- Timely submission of regular expenditure reports (six-monthly)
- Expenditures are within the approved annual budget (or a timely revision submitted/approved).
- Regular budget revisions made when relevant.

128. The results of the evaluation of the project's adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures is Satisfactory.

4.5.2 Completeness of Financial Information

129. The Evaluation recorded where standard financial documentation is complete, missing, inaccurate, incomplete or unavailable in a timely manner.

130. There have been Project Revisions over the years between 2015-2023 (# 19 – # 24) for the 416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, where Budget revisions has been held.
- For Project Revision # 24, 15/12/2021, Budget Project revision #24 exists 15/12/2021.
 - For Project Revision # 23, 06/02/2020, Budget Project revision #23 exists of 06/02/2020.
 - For Project revision #22, 25 /02/2019, Budget Project revision #22 exists of 20/02/2019.
 - For Project revision #21, 12/12/2017, Budget Project revision #21 exists of 12/12/2017.
 - For Project revision #20, 05/01/2017, Budget Project revision #20 exists of 13/12/2016.
 - For Project revision #19, 08/04/2016, Budget Project revision #19 exists of 08/04/2016.
131. Budget Project revisions of the (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, contains information of: 1) Staff and other personal costs; 2) Contractual services; 3) Travel; 4) Equipment vehicles and furniture; 5) Operating and other direct costs; 6) Supplies commodities and materials; 7) Transfers and grants issued to implementing partner (IP); and 8) Grants out.
132. The budget analyses of the Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24) analyse the budget for some activities such as: Secretariat, COP6, Private sector, NCAPs, EMP & Monitoring protocol, Public participation (Caspian Day SSFAs), CEIC, and Protocol implementation. Over the years some activities have been shifting, adding these new activities: CEIC & SoE2, Public-Private sector engagement, Aktau Protocol Implementation, PreCom1 to COP7, Climate Change, Caspian Day, WGMA, and Others.
133. The Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025 has a Project Costs and Financing analysis. The last document mentioned is complemented by the 416.3 Terminal Budget and Current expenses, 23April 2024.
134. The project's completeness of financial information using the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix shows that the project satisfied 81 – 100% with these items:
- a) High level project budget (costs) for secured and unsecured funds.
 - b) High level project budget by funding source(s) for secured and unsecured funds.
 - c) Project expenditure sheet (to-date).
 - d) Detailed project budget for secured funds.
 - e) Proof/report of delivery of in-kind contributions
 - f) Partner legal agreements and documentation for all amendments exist.
 - g) Re-approved project budget by budget line for project extensions (both cost and no-cost extension).
135. The results of the evaluation of the project's completeness of financial information is Moderately Satisfactory.

Table 16: Financial management

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's/Donor's policies and procedures:		S	—
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence ²⁸ to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		Yes	Expenditures recorded in IMIS & UNJA M1 32CPL – 000095-CP50230901
Was first disbursement carried out within the first year of this final evaluation scope, 2015?		Yes	Budget Project revision #19 of 08/04/2016
Were the procurement policies of UNEP and the donor(s) followed? (<i>where applicable</i>)		N/A	—
2. Completeness of project financial information²⁹:			
Provision of key documents to the evaluator (based on the responses to A-H below)		MS	—
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at implementation	Yes	- Programme of Work and Budget (2015-2021) - Programme of Work and Budget (2023-2024)
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	- Budget Project revision (#19-24)
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	See Annex III
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	- Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. - 416.3 Terminal Budget and Current expenses 23April 2024
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	- Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. - 416.3 Terminal Budget and Current expenses 23April 2024 - Project Revision # 24, 2021
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Yes	- 416.3 Terminal Budget and Current expenses 23April 2024 - Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025. - M1-32CPL – 000095 Final Certifies Financial Report signed on 29.10.2024 - Project Revision # 24, 2021 (annual)
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (<i>where applicable</i>)	N/A	—
H.	Procure documents ³⁰ , including the approved requisition document and Source Selection Plan (<i>where applicable</i>)	N/A	—
I.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	N/A	—
Overall rating		S	

Rating for Financial Management:

SATISFACTORY

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures: SATISFACTORY

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY

²⁸ If the evaluation raises concerns over adherence with policies or standard procedures, a recommendation maybe given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.

²⁹ See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference.

³⁰ Relevant for procurement action over USD 10,000 in value.

4.6 Efficiency

136. This section of the Evaluation assessed the extent to which the project delivered maximum results from the given resources. This includes an assessment of the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution. Focussing on cost-effectiveness it means the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. Timeliness refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently.
137. There had been many revisions of the project during the last years. The reason for the revisions of the project was to extend the project implementation until the Parties agreed on the structure of the permanent Secretariat. Following the decision at COP5 in 2014, which was to relocate the Tehran Convention Secretariat to Baku, Azerbaijan, and subsequent UNEA endorsement. The process faced delays, primarily due to disagreements among the Contracting Parties over the Secretariat's administrative arrangements. Despite seven preparatory meetings and attempts to resolve issues, no consensus was reached³¹.
138. The process also was hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the related travel restrictions.
139. The project extensions were crucial to ensuring a smooth transition, securing continued operations, and addressing recommendations from previous evaluations, including enhancing private sector engagement and political cooperation efforts. However, the project design or implementation did not describe any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe.

Findings Statements on Efficiency:

140. The project's efficiency using the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix show:
- The project has had at least two justified 'no cost extensions' of one year or more against the formally approved results framework.
 - And/or project activities/events were *occasionally* sequenced efficiently.
 - And/or the project operated within existing roles, mechanisms or institutions or expanded them in an efficient and effective manner.
141. The results of the evaluation of the project's efficiency results in a Moderately Unsatisfactory assessment.

Rating for Efficiency:	MODERATELY UNSATISFACTORY
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³¹ Project revision document #24 (2021)

4.7 Monitoring and Reporting

142. The Evaluation assesses monitoring and reporting across two sub-categories: a) monitoring implementation and b) project reporting.

4.7.1 Monitoring of Project Implementation

143. Monitoring of project implementation (including use of monitoring data for adaptive management) was manifested in the regular COP meetings that were held. Before 2015, 5 COPs took place; after 2015 PreComs 1 to 8, Extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties and COP 6 occurred.

144. The Evaluation shows that no monitoring system was operational and facilitated to timely tracking results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period. Despite it, this assessment confirms that the project gathered relevant and good quality baseline information that is accurately and appropriately documented on interim secretariat reports.

145. The information generated by the interim secretariat during project implementation was of good quality and used properly to adapt and improve project outputs' execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability.

146. The Evaluation confirms that funds allocated for the interim secretariat were used to support the monitoring of the Tehran convention.

147. At evaluation, using the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix, evidence suggests that:

- A basic monitoring plan exists (items from "a" to "d" of completeness of financial information were present).
- Minimal amounts of baseline data and/or project implementation data were collected.

BUT

- Only some baseline data were relevant and useful.
- Project implementation data are incomplete and/or not at the level of detail required and have not been used or shared during the life of the project.
- Data collected are not disaggregated by vulnerable / marginalized groups, including gender.

AND

- There is no evidence that any specific budgeted funds were spent on data collection/field visits etc for monitoring as such.

148. The results of the evaluation of the project's monitoring of project implementation results in Moderately Satisfactory.

4.7.2 Project Reporting

149. This evaluation section outlines which project reporting documentation was done and whether it was complete, accurate, available in a timely manner or was not.

150. UNEP has a centralised Information Management System (e.g. PIMS, IPMR etc) in which project managers upload regular progress reports against agreed project milestones. This evaluation assures that the following information was generated during implementation from 2015 to 2023:

- Progress Reports included in Project Revision documents (# 19 – # 24).
- Programme of work and budget 2023-2024
- Project performance Highlights

- Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025.

151. Specific reports to each meeting were generated. In this way the following narrative reports documents were elaborated:

- PrepComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8
- Extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the parties
- COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19
- COP6 Info Documents: From TC. COP6.INFO 1 to TC. COP6.INFO 7

152. At evaluation, using the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix, evidence suggests that:

- Substantial (but still incomplete) documentation of project progress available,
- Evidence of substantial collaboration and communication with appropriate UNEP colleagues.
- PIMS/donor reporting has occasional gaps, until Project Revision #24 of 2021.
- Data reported is not disaggregated by vulnerable/marginalized groups, including gender.

AND

- The PIMS/donor reporting does not adequately reflect the project scope of work.
- Consistency between report progress in PIMS/donor reports and available evidence.

153. The results of the evaluation of the project's reporting results in Moderately Satisfactory.

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting:	MODERATELY SATISFACTORY
<i>Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation:</i>	<i>MODERATELY SATISFACTORY</i>
<i>Rating for Project Reporting:</i>	<i>MODERATELY SATISFACTORY</i>

4.8 Sustainability

154. Sustainability is understood as the probability of project outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The Evaluation identifies and assesses the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the endurance of achieved project outcomes (i.e.. 'assumptions' and 'drivers'). Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention.

155. As used here, 'sustainability' means the long-term maintenance of outcomes and consequent impacts, whether environmental or not. This is distinct from the concept of sustainability in the terms 'environmental sustainability' or 'sustainable development', which imply 'not living beyond our means' or 'not diminishing global environmental benefits'.

156. Sustainability is assessed against three sub-criteria: a) socio-political sustainability, b) financial sustainability and c) institutional sustainability.

4.8.1 Socio-political Sustainability

157. The Evaluation assesses the extent to which social or political factors support the continuation and further development of project outcomes. Also, the evaluation considers

the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards.

158. At evaluation, evidence suggests that the sustainability of project outcomes has a *High* Degree of Dependency on social/political factors.
159. Evidence suggested there is a *High Level* of ownership, interest and commitment among government and among other stakeholders. However, the ownership might be subject to government changes.
160. Taken in consideration Tehran Convention Protocols had been ratified, a *Moderate Mechanism* is in place to adapt to changes in the social/political context. Also, is relevant that social norms and/or political priorities have been identified during the project, and some have been discussed among the stakeholders.
161. The results of the evaluation of the project's Socio – Political Sustainability is High dependency with 75-99% mitigation, that is considered as Moderately Likely.

4.8.2 Financial Sustainability

162. The Evaluation assesses the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on: a continuous flow of action that needs to be resourced to be maintained, and future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained.
163. In order to derive benefits from project outcomes, further management actions will still be needed. The Project Outcomes of the Theory of Change at Evaluation are:
- Outcome A: Institutional ownership of the five Caspian littoral States for the Tehran Convention increased.
 - Outcome B: Operational framework for the implementation of the Convention/ Protocols established.
 - Outcome C: Commitment of Caspian countries for collaborative action in the fields of biodiversity conservation, pollution from land-based sources, environmental impact assessment and oil pollution incidents increased and embedded in national legislation
164. At evaluation, all evidence suggests that all three Project outcomes have a *High Dependency* on future funding / financial flows to persist.
165. The Trust Fund, that is based on contributions made by the Parties of the Tehran Convention, which is US\$ 72000 annually by each one of the 5 Caspian Sea Littoral country, means that almost 75-99% of the required future funding requirements have been secured. Consequently, it can be established that it exists between 75-99% of mitigation of the financial sustainability.
166. A strategy with a financial component has been developed: Programme of Work and Budget (2023-2024). Moreover, the number of requests for regional cooperation has increased (e.g. Kazakhstan submitted a project proposal, and Turkmenistan suggested to revitalize the Caspian Environment Programme (CEP), a GEF financed programme which served as the basis for the Convention and its POW).
167. Securing future funding is relevant to financial sustainability where project outcomes are being extended into a future project phase. The results of the evaluation of the project's Financial Sustainability is Moderately Likely.

4.8.3 Institutional Sustainability

168. The evaluation assesses the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes (especially those relating to policies and laws) is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance. It will consider whether institutional achievements (such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements) are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure.
169. At evaluation, evidence suggests that the sustainability of project outcomes have a High Dependency on / sensitivity to institutional support.
170. Due to draft policies having been completed and some have been approved, and that the capacity of relevant individuals has been enhanced, and they are likely to stay in their position as national representatives of Tehran Convention; and that a strategy for the Tehran Convention has been developed, it is concluded that a robust mechanism is in place to sustain/support the institutionalisation of the project outcomes. It means that institutional capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained, it exists between 75-99% of mitigation.
171. The results of the evaluation of the project's Institutional Sustainability is Moderately Likely.

Rating for Likelihood of Sustainability (use 'Likely' scale): MODERATELY LIKELY

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: MODERATELY LIKELY

Rating for Financial Sustainability: MODERATELY LIKELY

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: MODERATELY LIKELY

4.9 Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

4.9.1 Quality of Project Management and Supervision

172. In this case, quality of project management and supervision refers to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments.
173. Regarding providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; "the interim Secretariat of the Tehran Convention, within the framework of its functions (p.4Article 23 TC) assisted the Caspian countries to maintain project relevance even in changing contexts, and sustain productive partner relationships".
174. The Conference of the Parties (COP) remains the main governing body of the Convention, and all significant and binding decisions regarding the Convention's processes and activities will continue to be made there by the Caspian states. This reinforces the idea that the countries themselves are the primary decision-makers moving forward, with the Convention providing a platform for collaboration, governance, and policy-setting.
175. The Tehran Convention keeps its full-fledged existence and development supported by the members-states' early contributions and the Trust Fund established. The Tehran Convention also actively mobilizes resources to develop projects on national and regional level.

176. Evidence suggests that:
- Interim Secretariat (Steering Committee or equivalent oversight/guidance mechanism) established and functioning moderately well (no evidence of records of regular meetings, but there are other documents where relevant content discussed).
 - The teams of the Caspian Littoral countries involved in implementation of the project have been managed moderately well.
 - The working relationship between the PM/TM and project partners has been constructive and/or effective to a moderate extent.
 - Low turnover of staff associated and when it happened, it was with good (i.e. systematized but partial) handover processes and information exchange (supported by good documentation) between outgoing and incoming staff.
 - The majority of project staff, including some key members, had capacity that is aligned with project requirements and are located appropriately for efficient project implementation.
 - A good amount of regular and constructive information exchange between project team, PM/TM and UNEP colleagues has taken place.
 - The Interim Secretariat provided good leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes.
177. An adaptive management was assessed moderate, based on:
- Speed of responses to execution challenges or contextual changes (evidenced through pandemic response where email correspondence and virtual communication and reporting were held).
 - Adequacy of management response to financial shortfalls, response shows clear prioritization of the Caspian littoral states.
178. The results of the evaluation of the quality project management and supervision is Moderately Satisfactory.

4.9.2 Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

179. The term 'stakeholder' considers all project partners, people involved, and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP.
180. The assessment has considered the quality and effectiveness of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life and the support given to maximise collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise.
181. At COP4 in Moscow, Russian Federation 2012, the Ministers "welcomed the finalization of the Public Participation Strategies of the Contracting Parties as a part of the Action Plans containing measures on the implementation of the Tehran Convention at the national level or NCAPs". A synthesis report was presented (Annex I to TC/COP4/INF.5) which summarized, analysed and compared the five national public participation strategies. The countries requested the interim Secretariat "to regularly update the synthesis report based on the national reports of the Contracting Parties".
182. After, at a meeting of the Caspian stakeholders and civil society representatives in Astrakhan, Russian Federation 2015, participants agreed on a statement (as Annex 1 of the same) which included a detailed list of recommendations for enhanced civil society engagement in the Tehran Convention process for submission to COP6.
183. At the 4th preparatory Committee meeting (PrepCom4) for COP6 in Geneva, Switzerland, November 2016, the countries requested the interim Secretariat to explore

follow-up activities taking into account the Astrakhan Statement and Recommendations by Civil Society and other Stakeholders and agreed to include a recommendation for annual Caspian Sea Day events in the draft Ministerial Statement of COP6. Then, the interim Secretariat developed a draft project to enhance stakeholder engagement and public participation in the Caspian Sea region with the support of Integral Petroleum SA (TC/COP6/Info2).

184. Moreover, international and intergovernmental bodies and agencies expressed a wish to be represented at the sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties COP6, and which, in the view of the interim Secretariat, were qualified in matters covered by the Convention. They were: Association of State Universities of Caspian Sea Region Countries, Caspian Seal Research and Rehabilitation Center (CSRRC), GRID-Arendal, ADA University, BP Azerbaijan Office, Oil Spill Preparedness Regional Initiative (OSPRI), and Sustainera Consulting Services.
185. Also, when preparation of the COP6 in accordance with the Rules and Procedures of the Tehran Convention, the interim Secretariat prepared a draft list of observers, who based on informal consultations wanted to participate at the COP6. The observers were: UNDP, FAO, IMO, GCF, GEF, OSPRI, CITES, CBD, IUCN, GRID-Arendal, Leeds University, CASPCOM, New World / Coca Cola Foundation, Representatives of the Astrakhan Agreement on emergency response, Representatives of the Astrakhan Agreement on the protection of aquabiotic resources, IDEA Campaign, Baku State University, The International Association for Great Lakes Research, BP, Lukoil, Kazmunaigaz, Dragon Oil, Petronas, Integral Petroleum, Iranian National Tanker Company, Iranian National Oil Company and SOCAR.
186. The note developed by the Interim Secretariat on COP6, November 2019, mentioned that by the Ministerial decisions taken at subsequent Conferences of the Parties (COPs), including COP5, 30 May 2014 Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, the Contracting Parties welcome the participation of relevant international organizations and the private sector, including the oil and gas industry and the maritime transport companies, and encourage them to support the implementation of the Tehran Convention and its Protocols. Cooperation with the private sector was furthermore encouraged by the Protocols to the Tehran Convention, in particular in Article 14 of the Aktau Protocol, Article 20 of the Moscow Protocol, Article 21 of the Ashgabat Protocol.
187. At its 4th Meeting the PrepCom, held November 2016 in Geneva, it was requested to the interim Secretariat to explore possibilities for intensifying collaboration with the private sector. A Round Table on Collaboration with the Private Sector was held at the meeting in Iran (Bandar Anzali, 16-20 April 2017).
188. Since, the interim Secretariat explored collaboration opportunities with the private sector, promising thematic areas were: the implementation of the Aktau and Moscow Protocols as well as stakeholder engagement. In 2020, the project "Addressing Marine Litter in the Caspian Sea Region" supported by the Coca-Cola-Foundation was implemented. Furthermore, the Secretariat developed a draft project document with Integral Petroleum SA on enhancing stakeholder engagement and public participation. Another project with support of BP for the development of the 2nd State of the Caspian Environment Report and the upgrade of the Caspian Environmental Information Centre was finalized in December 2018 (see TC/COP6/16).
189. The Interim Secretariat of the Tehran Convention collaborates through the National Convention Liaison Office (NCLO) of each Caspian littoral state, with different stakeholders' groups.

190. At evaluation, using the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix, evidence suggests that:

- Implementation began, and was undertaken, with a moderate analysis of stakeholder groups in general. Even there was a strong analysis of primary stakeholders, there was a moderate one of secondary stakeholders, and others that could be affected by the project.
- There have been moderate efforts, with mixed effectiveness, made by Interim Secretariat and Project Team to promote stakeholder ownership (of process or outcome).
- There was good (mostly effective but sometimes irregular and/or poorly timed) consultation and/or communication with stakeholder groups during the life of the project.
- Good support was given to collaboration or collective action between stakeholder groups (e.g. sharing plans, pooling resources, exchanging learning and expertise).
- Linkages to poverty alleviation or impact on economic livelihoods have not been considered or addressed in the project.

191. The results of the evaluation of stakeholder participation and cooperation is Moderately Satisfactory.

4.9.3 Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

192. The Evaluation analysed to what extent project implementation took into consideration: (i) possible inequalities (especially those related to gender) (ii) specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups (especially women and children); and (iii) the role of disadvantaged groups (especially those related to gender) in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation. The results were not favourable.

193. The project document did not have an explicit commitment on equality (i.e. promoting human rights, gender equality and inclusion of those living with disabilities and/or belonging to marginalised/vulnerable groups) reason why it was included as a driver in the reconstructed Theory of Change at evaluation.

194. The evaluation ascertained that the project implementation did not apply the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context, the Evaluation assessed to what extent the intervention adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment, and it was minimal.

195. Equality implementation strategies were not incorporated in the project's design, while some others were introduced during project's implementation as a result of good project management, especially when planning and developing annual Caspian Sea Day.

196. At the stage of project designs review within UNEP, a 'Gender Score' is applied. The score is used as a mechanism to improve UNEP's inclusion of, and responsiveness to, gender equity issues. The category, for this project design, for the Gender Scoring was zero, 0- Gender blind. This score meant that the Gender relevance was not at all reflected in the project document.

197. Evidence suggests human rights/ gender considerations are demonstrated in interpretation of results. The Tehran Convention helps to protect the natural resources of the sea and ensure their sustainable use for future generations. This, in turn, contributes

to the protection of human rights related to access to clean water, healthy environment, and sustainable development.

198. The results of the evaluation of the project's Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity is Highly Unsatisfactory.

4.9.4 Environmental and Social Safeguards

199. UNEP established a safeguard policy in 2015 and made it operational in 2017. UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF) looks at human well-being and protection of the environment from potential adverse impacts of projects implementation. The Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF), introduced in 2019, helps identify potential environmental and social risks and impacts. In 2020, the ESSF was updated adding to it tools, templates, guidance notes and reference materials.
200. UNEP projects address environmental and social safeguards primarily through the process of environmental and social screening, risk assessment and management (avoidance, minimization, mitigation or, in exceptional cases, offsetting) of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities.
201. The project design did not fully consider the Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF) of UNEP as it was not mandatory at that time.
202. The Evaluation confirmed UNEP environmental and social safeguards requirements³² were neither met in design nor in implementation. Specially there were not: review risk ratings on a regular basis; monitoring of project implementation for possible safeguard issues; response (where relevant) to safeguard issues through risk avoidance, minimization, mitigation or offsetting and report on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken.
203. Moreover, the evaluation revealed that the project design and implementation management did not minimise UNEP's environmental footprint.
204. Although the nature of the project that involved the Interim Secretariat did not consider UNEP Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF) there is no information/evidence about any negative effects produced by the Project. At the same time, all the projects under the Convention included a reference to environmental, social and economic policies to prevent and mitigate the potential for undue and unintended harm that could arise from projects' activities.
205. The interim Secretariat of the Tehran Convention, within the framework of its functions (p.4 Article 23 TC) assisted the Caspian Sea countries in solving the environmental problems of the Caspian Sea through the organization of relevant events within the framework of the Work programs of the Convention, organization of the development of SOE, the activities of the CEIC and others.
206. At evaluation, using the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix, evidence suggests safeguarding considerations are demonstrated in 2 out of 5 items below.
- a) There was no management plan for addressing project's safeguarding.

³² For the review of project concepts and proposals, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) was introduced in 2019 and replaced the Environmental, Social and Economic Review note (ESERN), which had been in place since 2016.

- b) There was no review(s) of risk ratings.
- c) There was no monitoring of project implementation for safeguarding issues.
- d) There was at implementation, response (where relevant) to safeguarding issues.
- e) There was reporting on safeguarding issues (specially climate change) or reporting that no safeguarding issues arose.

AND

- Environmental and social impacts (such as Caspian Sea level fluctuation threats, pollution and biodiversity loss), to key stakeholders and, in particular, to the most vulnerable groups (fishermen) are considered or addressed to a limited extent.
- Occasional/ ad hoc efforts (conference, scientific studies, and reports, etc) were made, by UNE, member states or its partners, to consider or minimize the project's environmental footprint.

207. The results of the evaluation of the project's Environmental and Social Safeguards is Unsatisfactory.

4.9.5 Country Ownership and Driven-ness

208. The Evaluation assessed the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project.

209. The Evaluation considered those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions. By signing the Tehran Convention, the Caspian Sea littoral countries demonstrated their commitment to the project's desired impact. This is further reinforced by the participation of various ministries from each of the five Caspian Sea littoral states.

210. The Tehran Convention is an actively acting legal instrument with the established institutional mechanisms of the implementation of the Convention such as the Conference of the Parties,(Article 22), the Secretariat of the Convention (Article 23), National Convention liaison officers (decision6 of the second Meeting of the Conference of Parties – COP-2 10-12 November 2008 Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran),Working group on monitoring and information exchange(decision 11 of COP5 May 2014 Ashgabat, Turkmenistan).

211. NCLOs, engaged at the nomination of their Governments have played an important catalytic and supportive role in mobilizing internal action and support for the implementation of the Convention and the development of its Protocols, via providing information and consultancy assistance to the Convention interim Secretariat on matters of their countries' concern.

212. The functions of the Interim Secretariat are determined by p. 4 of Article 23 of the Tehran Convention and include, among other things, the provision of technical assistance and advice for the effective implementation of the Convention and its protocols.

213. The facilitation of the Interim Secretariat in the negotiation processes for the Protocols of the Tehran Convention along with the successful organization of the six Meeting of the Conference of the Parties represented significant milestones. It resulted in enhanced cooperation between Caspian States on biodiversity conservation, pollution control, and environmental impact assessments proving a good intergovernmental process.

214. Regarding Generation and Transfer of Knowledge it should be mentioned that Regular meetings of COPs, PrepComs, and other technical group such as the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment provided critical platforms for knowledge sharing between

the five Caspian littoral States, fostering technical collaboration on monitoring environmental changes. Furthermore, the adoption of the new Environmental Monitoring Programme (EMP) also ensured a shared commitment to coordinated monitoring and data collection in the region. Also, the Scientific Conference on Climate Change in the Caspian Sea Region also served as a critical platform for the generation and transfer of knowledge on climate impacts specific to the region. Experts from various fields presented research highlighting the vulnerabilities of the Caspian ecosystem to rising temperatures, fluctuating sea levels, and shifting weather patterns. It should also be emphasized that the conference fostered collaboration among regional and international scientists, facilitating the exchange of data and best practices.

215. In terms of Capacity-Building and Advisory Services the Tehran Convention supports the five Caspian states through targeted capacity-building and advisory services, facilitating the implementation of regionally tailored environmental policies and projects. Key efforts include strengthening institutional frameworks and enhancing technical expertise to address pressing environmental challenges. Training courses were organized with the European Environment Agency and IMO to mentioned some of them. Advisory services were solicited from the ESPOO convention and CBD for the purpose of the negotiations of the regional protocols.

216. Concerning Governments' capacities, the Tehran Convention process has enabled national governments to build capacity in negotiating and implementing environmental agreements. An example is the ratification of ancillary Protocols to the Tehran Convention, the one has strengthened the ability of the States to align national priorities with regional commitments.

217. At evaluation, using the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix, evidence suggests for country Ownership and Driven-ness that all Government ministries / public sector agencies that are essential for moving from outputs to project outcomes or from project outcomes to intermediate states took a leadership role in THREE of the following:

- Strategic guidance of project delivery = half delivered
- Driving or advocating for change to achieve higher level results = half delivered
- Endorsing / accepting project results = full commitment.
- Initiating non-cost complementary or additional activities = no comments
- Provision of in-kind and / or cash co-financing contributions; making provisions in forward-looking budgetary plans or securing additional external resources = commitment.

218. The results of the evaluation of Country Ownership and Driven-ness is Moderately Satisfactory

4.9.6 Communication and Public Awareness

219. The Evaluation assessed the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The Evaluation considered whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively.

220. The Interim Secretariat guided the solving of environmental problems of the Caspian Sea through the organization of relevant events within the framework of the Work programs of the Convention, organization of the development of SOE, the activities of the CEIC and others.

a) Communication of learning

221. The Interim Secretariat contributed to the maintained and regular update of the information at the Caspian Environment Information Center (CEIC).
222. The main instrument of the Tehran Convention in the field of information was the Caspian Web-Based Environment Information Center (CEIC), which contains the data and information sent in the context of the Tehran Convention and Protocols for it. The Interim Secretariat provided its full functioning and coordinates its work.
223. The website of the Tehran Convention served as the primary digital database for publicly available document and materials and it was used effectively. The transition to IPMR was ensured as the Trust Fund is built on the IPMR structure.
224. All project documents, database, dynamic digital products and software developed throughout the Project are stored and used as per usual practice according to the Tehran Convention administration rules.

b) Public awareness activities

225. The informational and educational activities of the Convention are carried out by the Caspian countries in the coordination of this activity of the Interim Secretariat.
226. The measures, such as the “Caspian Sea Day”, annually celebrated in the Caspian littoral states on 12 August, in accordance with the decision of the first session of the Conference of the Parties (2007), are a striking example of information activity for the promotion of the Convention.
227. Caspian Sea Day activities held annually, 2016-2023, in all five Caspian Sea littoral States emphasized the Convention's relevance to the public, involving civil society, private sector, international organizations, academia, university students, environmental activists and regional NGOs. The enhanced involvement of regional NGOs networks empowered these organizations to act as conduits of environmental advocacy at the national level. The activities of the Caspian Sea Day included: public environmental campaigns, scientific conferences, other events such as raising awareness among children and youth, cultural events and beach clean-up campaigns in coastal zones. The event highlighted the collective commitment of the Caspian littoral states to preserve the biodiversity and ecological integrity of the Caspian Sea.
228. Various knowledge products, including reports, guidelines, and public awareness events, are disseminated and workshops are held within different Tehran Convention projects to ensure broad stakeholder engagement and sustainable integration into future initiatives ³³.
229. At evaluation, using the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix, evidence suggests that:
- Some key audiences driving the desired change have moderate awareness of project's main messages
 - Communication activities and channels were:
 - Targeted well towards some audiences, as private sector, NGO and different institutions that acted as observers in some meetings.
 - Rarely interactive / responsive to audience feedback.
 - Poorly monitored for evidence of effect of the communications and public awareness interventions.

³³ Operational Project Closure Report 20/01/2025.

- Partially budgeted/ financed.
- Communication/public awareness efforts have been moderately effective (during the last years) in driving change towards results beyond outputs.
- Adequate experience sharing between project partners and other interested groups / stakeholders.
- A good but limited communication plan/strategy was prepared (not in project design) and partially implemented during the last years.

230. The results of the evaluation of the project's completeness of communication and public awareness is Moderately Satisfactory.

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues: MODERATELY UNSATISFACTORY

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: HIGHLY

UNSATISFACTORY

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: UNSATISFACTORY

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

231. The primary aim of this project was to create and elaborate the framework for the successful implementation of the Tehran Convention and its ancillary Protocols and to promote the ownership of the Caspian Sea littoral States. As such, from the early stages of project design and through the entire life of the project, activities were always focused on, and responsive to, the specific needs of the key project stakeholders (notably the national state actors).
232. Additionally the proposed impact of the project is: “Improved sustainable management and protection of the Caspian Sea”. Two major areas the Convention focused: (i) protection, preservation and restoration of the marine environment; and (ii) prevention, reduction and control from all sources of pollution”.
233. Overall, the project performed a MODERATELY SATISFACTORY rating for the period 2015-2023, with a score of 4.00. The project decreased in its rating for the last 9 years if we compare it to the overall project rating of the first Terminal Evaluation of 2015, which stated the project had a SATISFACTORY performance.
234. The main achievements of the project were that the Aktau Protocol (Protocol Concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents) and the Moscow Protocol (Protocol for the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities) had successfully entered into force. On the other hand, the Ashgabat Protocol (Protocol for the Conservation of Biological Diversity) and the EIA Protocol (Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context) are still pending ratification. In addition, the delay in ratifying these crucial protocols had impeded progress on critical issues like biodiversity protection and environmental governance in transboundary contexts.
235. Furthermore, the Protocol on Monitoring, Assessment and Information Exchange is still under negotiation, reflecting challenges in aligning the priorities and interests of the Caspian States.
236. These achievements were brought about largely by the interim Secretariat of the Tehran Convention, within the framework of its functions (p.4 Article 23 TC) assisted the Caspian Sea littoral countries with the provision of technical assistance and advice for the effective implementation of the Convention and its protocols. As well, in solving the environmental problems of the Caspian Sea through the organization of relevant events within the framework of the Work programs of the Convention, organization of the development of SOE, the activities of the CEIC and others.
237. The positive role of interim Secretariat has been repeatedly emphasized in the decisions of the sessions of Conferences of the Parties to the Convention.
238. The sustainability of the project is rated at the MODERATELY LIKELY performance. The main features that support the sustainability of the benefits brought by the project are: socio political sustainability, financial sustainability and institutional sustainability. The three types of sustainability were analysed and were rated as Moderately Likely.

239. The implementation of the Tehran Convention has also been marked by challenges, one major struggle has been the delayed establishment of a permanent Secretariat for the Convention. Difficulties in securing consensus on its location and structure have delayed its formation, leading to fragmented and less efficient coordination of environmental activities. This absence of a permanent institutional body has impacted the continuity and effectiveness of projects and hindered the Convention's ability to fully achieve its planned outcomes.
240. The Tehran Convention keeps its full-fledged existence and development supported by the members-states' early contributions and the Trust Fund established. The Tehran Convention also actively mobilizes resources to develop projects on national and regional level.
241. The Tehran Convention addressed the lack of scientific and technical capacity in Caspian Sea countries for climate change adaptation, particularly in coastal communities. There is a significant deficiency in pollution monitoring, early warning systems, and effective communication between national hydrometeorological services and local stakeholders.
242. Human rights and gender dimensions are not included in the project development, as well as feedback channels.

Responses to Key Strategic Questions

243. In addition to the 9 evaluation criteria outlined above, the evaluation addresses some strategic questions (SQ) that were formulated in the Terms of Reference. These questions were posed by the UNEP Evaluation Office in conjunction with members of the Project Team.
244. Regarding strategic question one (SQ1): How much financial and technical assistance to the region has been provided pursuant to the signing of the Caspian Framework Convention by the Caspian Governments?

The Operational Project Closure Template, dated January 2025 mentioned as a total revised overall Project Budget USD \$ 6,041,196.00, in secured funding from participating countries and supporting project partners. The Trust Fund, that is based on contributions made by the Parties of the Tehran Convention, was USD \$ 72000.00 annually by each one of the 5 Caspian Sea Littoral country.

245. Regarding strategic question two (SQ2): What are some environmental actions that have been undertaken by the Caspian Governments following the signing of the Caspian Framework Convention?

Regarding Generation and Transfer of Knowledge it should be mentioned that Regular meetings of COPs, PrepComs, and other technical group such as the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment provided critical platforms for knowledge sharing between the five Caspian littoral States, fostering technical collaboration on monitoring environmental changes. Furthermore, the adoption of the new Environmental Monitoring Programme (EMP) also ensured a shared commitment to coordinated monitoring and data collection in the region. Also, the Scientific Conference on Climate Change in the Caspian Sea Region also served as a critical platform for the generation and transfer of knowledge on climate impacts specific to the region. Experts from various fields presented research highlighting the vulnerabilities of the Caspian ecosystem to rising

temperatures, fluctuating sea levels, and shifting weather patterns. It should also be emphasized that the conference fostered collaboration among regional and international scientists, facilitating the exchange of data and best practices.

246. Regarding strategic question three (SQ3): What agreement(s) have been reached on the role of the Tehran Convention process? Four Protocols were planned, designed and accepted : Aktau Protocol concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents (adopted and signed at COP-3 in Aktau, Kazakhstan on August 12, 2011); Moscow Protocol on the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land based Sources and Activities (adopted at COP-4 in Moscow, December 12, 2012); Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Trans-Boundary Context (adopted at COP-4 in Moscow on December 12, 2012); and Ashgabat Protocol on the Conservation of Biological Diversity (adopted and signed at COP-5 in May 30, 2014). It is noted that, although part of this project, these agreements pre-date the evaluation period (2015-23)

247. Regarding strategic question four (SQ4) about what changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance, the answer is:

COVID-19 pandemic affected project implementation by bringing delays in negotiations between the Caspian littoral countries on the arrangement for the Tehran Convention Secretariat. The pandemic changed the context, the momentum and the possibilities. Covid-19 pandemic coupled with travel restrictions led to inability of in-person meetings and discussions, which resulted in wider use of opportunities for online and hybrid meetings using digital platforms like Zoom, Teams, etc. However, no progress was made as the countries insisted on physical meetings to continue the negotiations on the secretariat arrangement.

The project did not have any adaptive measures planned for this kind of negative external event occurred during project implementation 2015-2023.

248. The table below (Table 17) provides a summary of the ratings and finding discussed in Chapter 4. Overall, the project demonstrates a rating of MODERATELY SATISFACTORY (4.03 total Weighted score).

Table 17: Summary of project findings and ratings³⁴

Criterion	2015 Rating	2025 Validated Rating
Strategic Relevance	Highly Satisfactory	SATISFACTORY
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
2. Alignment to UNEP Donor/Partner strategic priorities	-----	-----
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Highly Satisfactory	Satisfactory
4. Complementarity with existing interventions/ Coherence	Highly Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of Project Design	-----	MODERATELY SATISFACTORY
Nature of External Context	-----	UNFAVOURABLE
Effectiveness	Satisfactory	MODERATELY SATISFACTORY
1. Availability of outputs	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
2. Achievement of project outcomes	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
3. Likelihood of impact (use 'likely' scale)	Moderately Likely	Likely
Financial Management	Satisfactory	SATISFACTORY
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
2. Completeness of project financial information	-----	Moderately Satisfactory
Efficiency	Satisfactory	MODERATELY UNSATISFACTORY
Monitoring and Reporting	Moderately Unsatisfactory	MODERATELY SATISFACTORY
1. Monitoring of project implementation	Unsatisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
2. Project reporting	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
Sustainability (use 'likely' scale)	Moderately Likely	MODERATELY LIKELY
1. Socio-political sustainability	Likely	Moderately Likely
2. Financial sustainability	Moderately Likely	Moderately Likely
3. Institutional sustainability	Likely	Moderately Likely
Factors Affecting Performance	Satisfactory	MODERATELY UNSATISFACTORY

³⁴ Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, also on a six-point scale, from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU).

Criterion	2015 Rating	2025 Validated Rating
1. Quality of project management and supervision	Highly Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	-----	Moderately Satisfactory
2. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
3. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	-----	Highly Unsatisfactory
4. Environmental and social safeguards	Likely	Unsatisfactory
5. Country ownership and driven-ness	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
6. Communication and public awareness	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
Overall Project Performance Rating	Satisfactory	MODERATELY SATISFACTORY 4.03

5.2 Lessons learned

249. The Caspian Sea project highlights the importance of protecting shared natural resources through international cooperation and robust governance frameworks. Collective action can address complex transboundary issues effectively, by developing plans, integrating environmental matters and engaging stakeholders.
250. It is emphasized the need for clear institutional mechanisms, trust-building, and multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure sustainable outcomes. The project showed up the necessity of accounting for political difficulties, as differing national interests and geopolitical tensions can hinder progress if not proactively managed.

5.3 Recommendations

251. If it is considered to develop a second phase of the project, these should be included:
- A Theory of Change adapted to the current situation/reality.
 - A detailed Work Plan with specific indicators and deadlines. Where possible, assign responsibility for every action.
 - Identification of risks and management alternatives. In addition, a Mitigation Plan must be generated for the identified impacts and risks.
 - A Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan or a Measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) Plan should be developed for following up the Project's activities and results.
 - Include Environmental and social safeguards framework (ESSF) and developed a report for its implementation in the project.
 - A Communication Strategy, in order to communicate with internal and external stakeholders to achieve the indicators and goals. Also, for report the results to different stakeholders, and promotion of the Project itself to public and/or private sector.
 - Consideration of human resources and gender topics.
252. A Specific Plan should be developed in order to reach a consensus of the location and structure of the Permanent Secretariat in the region. This decision is taking several years, its resolution will allow efficient coordination on environmental activities.
253. A Financial Plan should be developed to obtain private financing. This would increase the project's activities and could lead to greater ownership by the stakeholders.
254. Encourage Protocols ratification/implementation/adoption by the signatory countries; and follow up of the finalization of Draft Protocol on Monitoring, Assessment and Information Exchange.
255. Enhance regional scientific cooperation and data sharing, especially on transboundary environmental issues, for addressing emerging threats, like Caspian Sea level fluctuations, pollution monitoring, and biodiversity loss, with better precision and coordination.
256. Human rights and gender dimensions should be included in project development. Also, feedback channels should be established in order the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalized groups are met.

ANNEX I. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
Strategic Questions		
SQ1: How much financial and technical assistance to the region has been provided pursuant to the signing of the Caspian Framework Convention by the Caspian Governments? SQ2. What are some environmental actions that have been undertaken by the Caspian Governments following the signing of the Caspian Framework Convention? SQ3. What agreement(s) have been reached on the role of the Tehran Convention process? SQ4. What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project documents, project team, stakeholders,
Strategic relevance		
How was the project aligned to the following: - Alignment to UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS)? - Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities? - Complementary with existing interventions? - Alignment with UNFCCC COP priorities? - Are stakeholders engagement relevant to the project design and implementation?	Desk review and interviews.	Project documents, UNEP MTS, Programmed of Work, SDGs, UNEP staff, government agencies.
Quality of Project Design		
See section 3 and Annex III of this inception report.	Desk review, interviews	Project document; Project Revisions, Project team
Nature of External Context		
Did the political, environmental, social, institutional and financial context change drastically or did a negative external event occurred during project implementation? How did the project adapt to this? Were there any adaptive measures planned and implemented in response to this situation?	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, interviews with key stakeholders.
Effectiveness		
Availability of Outputs		
Did the project succeed in achieving milestones? Did the project produce programmed outputs? Could the outputs be assessed in quality and quantity; as well as in ownership, usefulness and timeliness of their delivery? Brief explanation of the reasons of success of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards? Were stakeholders appropriately involved in producing programmed outputs?	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, interviews with key stakeholders, answers on surveys.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
Achievement of Project Outcomes		
How successful was the project in achieving the outcomes along the impact pathway on littoral countries of Caspian Sea? Did the Project achieve direct outcomes (the use/uptake/adoption/application of an output by intended beneficiaries, observed as changes in institutions or behaviour, attitude or condition) as defined in the reconstructed Theory of Change. Did the project include in the evaluation of project outcomes, stakeholder's engagement and their responsibilities?	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders, answers on surveys.
Likelihood of impact		
To what extent did the assumptions and drivers leading to the Intermediate States and the long-term impact hold? Have any intermediate states been achieved? Did the project create a long-term impact on the livelihoods of inhabitants of the littoral states? Did the project lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects?	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders, answers on surveys.
Financial Management		
Was the financial information of the project complete? How sound was the budget planning and execution? (Did expenditures match the approved budget / work-plan? What were the reasons for under/overspent budget, if any?) Did financial management issues affect the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance? Was the communication between financial and project management staff effective? Did the project consider the existence of budget lines for gender related activities?	Desk review, interviews.	Project document; Project Revisions.
Efficiency		
Did the operational execution of the project match the original planning timewise, budget wise, operational wise? What have been the main reasons for the delay and the time extensions of the project in implementation? Were the project extensions reasonable and justifiable? Were there any impacts on planned outputs and outcomes? Was the project affected in project execution, costs and effectiveness? Was the project cost-effective?	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders, answers on surveys.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
Monitoring and Reporting		
Monitoring design and budgeting		
Did the Project have a Monitoring Plan (MP)? Did the project have SMART³⁵ indicators to track the progress of project's outputs and achievement of direct outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, vulnerability or marginalisation? What was the quality of the design Monitoring Plan? If there were allocation funds for its implementation? Did the project have disaggregated indicators by relevant stakeholders' groups including gender and minority/disadvantages groups.	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders, answers on surveys.
Monitoring of project implementation		
Did the project have a Monitoring System? Is this system facilitating the timely tracking for results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period? Did the monitoring of project implementation include Stakeholders engagement and responsibilities? Did the project utilize effective strategies and resources to ensure beneficiaries are targeted for monitoring, taking into account their social functions/workload and social and cultural norms and practices which may inhibit their full participation?	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders, answers on surveys.
Project reporting		
Did the project fulfil all the UN reporting requirements? Were the monitoring or progress reports gender neutral (i.e. reflecting gendered experiences equally) and /or gender sensitive (i.e. reporting experiences differentiated by gender groups), when appropriate? Stakeholders engagement and responsibilities	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders.
Sustainability		
Socio-political sustainability		
To what extent were there financial, institutional, socio-political, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results? Are individual capacity development efforts likely to be sustained, which ones? What was the level of readiness of national government stakeholders to continue working on the	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders, answers on surveys.

³⁵ SMART refers to indicators that are specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-specific.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
project's-initiated policy and legal changes, and on strengthening the institutional arrangements?		
Financial sustainability		
To what extent are the project outcomes financially sustainable? To what extent was the continuation of project results and the eventual impact of the project dependent on financial resources? What is the likelihood that adequate financial resources will be available in the future to continue implementing the programs, plans, agreements, monitoring systems etc. prepared and agreed upon under the project in evaluation?	Desk review, interviews.	Project document; Project Revisions.
Institutional Sustainability		
To what extent the sustainability of project outcomes (especially those relating to policies and laws) are dependent on issues related to institutional frameworks and governance? Are institutional governance structures and processes, policies, regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure?	Desk review, interviews.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team.
Factors affecting project performance and cross cutting issues		
Preparation and readiness		
Did the project develop appropriate measures that either: address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilization?	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders.
Quality of project management and supervision		
How effective was the project management with regard to: - Planning and implementing activities for delivering the stated results, supervising the project performance? - Ensuring the participation of all the relevant stakeholders in project activities? - Ensuring coordination, knowledge sharing among the involved parties / similar initiatives - Responding to and overcoming challenges, managing risks?	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders.
Stakeholder participation and cooperation		
Did the project identify key stakeholders' groups, and describe their interests and influence/ power into the project? Did the stakeholders participate in the preparation of the project?	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders, answers on surveys.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
Did the project have a Stakeholders Engagement Plan (SEP)? Did the project describe measures to remove obstacles to stakeholder's participation, which ones? Did the project implement strategies to address the needs of the stakeholders? Was any individual or a group affected by the activities of the project? Was any individual or a group affected by the development of the activities of the project? Did the project establish the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project? Were any positive gains observed? Did the project have a Stakeholder Response Mechanism (SRM)?	Records of stakeholder's assistance and participation.	
Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity		
Did the project give attention to gender and unrepresented / marginalised groups, including the ones living with disabilities? Were men/ women, young/ old, able-bodied/ disabilities/ long-term illness and mainstream groups/ minorities involved in, or affected by the project in the same way? Did the project address diverse/specific needs of specific sub-groups (e.g. children, girls, women and men with disabilities, etc)? Were any positive equity gains observed during the project's life? Did the project develop specific gender indicators? Did the project give any recommendations for gender? How did the project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment? See section 3 and Annex III of this inception report.	Desk review, interviews, and survey. Records of stakeholder's assistance and participation.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders, answers on surveys.
Environmental and social safeguards		
Did the project involve or lead to reforestation, plantation development and/or forest harvesting? Did the project support fisheries, aquaculture, animal production, agricultural production and/or harvesting? Did the project lead to engagement of security personnel to support project activities (e.g. protection of property or personnel, patrolling of protected areas?) Did the project identify environmental, social and climate impacts? Were project activities adjacent to or within a Cultural heritage site? Did the project itself identify as a way of protection of cultural heritage sites or intangible forms of cultural heritage? Were local communities vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and disaster risks (e.g. considering level of exposure and adaptive capacity)? Did the project develop an Environmental and Social Risk assessment and/or an Environmental and Social Risk Mitigation Plan? Did the project develop a climate change and disaster risk analysis, planning, implementation,	Desk review, interviews, survey.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders, answers on surveys.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
monitoring and evaluation? Did the project consider and/or identify any negative effects from unidentified environmental and social risks? See section 3 and Annex III of this inception report.		
Country ownership and driven-ness		
The evaluation will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. The evaluation will consider the involvement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices.	Desk review, interviews.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders, answers on surveys.
Communication and public awareness		
Did the project establish key channels or knowledge sharing platforms of communication between the project and the stakeholders and between the stakeholders themselves? Did the project have a communication plan? Did the project have a Public awareness plan, strategy or agenda? And if yes, was it well conducted? Did stakeholders participate and benefit from anticipated outcomes of the project? Was relevant information of the project made available and accessible to the public (private and public)?	Desk review, interviews, surveys, case studies, website communication platforms.	Project document; Project Revisions, project team, interviews with key stakeholders, answers on surveys.

ANNEX II. STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED DURING THE EVALUATION

Stakeholders consulted during the evaluation

Organization	Position	Country	Gender
GRID Arendal	Scientific Consultant	Norway	M
Islamic Azad University	International consultant	Iran	M
Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan	National Convention Liaison Officer	Turkmenistan	F
Independent Ex - UNEP Caspian Secretariat	Consultant Ex - UNEP Staff	Switzerland	M
Deputy Office for Marine Environment Department of the Environment	National Convention Liaison Officer	Iran	F
Ministry of Environment and Water Resources	National Convention Liaison Officer	Kazakhstan	M
OSPRI	Consultant	United Kingdom	M
Russian Federation Center for International Projects	National Convention Liaison Officer	The Russian Federation	F

ANNEX III. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project planning and reporting documents:

- 416.3 Terminal Budget and Current Expenses 23 April 2024
- 416.3 Operational Project Closure Report Template1 12.2023
- M1-32CPL-000095_Final Certified Financial Report_signed
- Annex: Project Document Supplement. 19/12/2013.
- UNEP Project Document “(Interim) Secretariat services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea”. UNEP DEPI Comment 24.09.2008.
-

Project Revision:

- Project Revision #24 416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea). 15/12/2021.
- Project revisions #23 416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, 06/02/2020 & Project Budget.
- Project revisions #22 416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, 20/02/2019 & Project Budget.
- Project revisions #21 416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea & Project Budget.
- Project revisions #20 416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, 13/12/2016 & Project Budget.
- Project revisions #19 416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, 04/02/2016 & Project Budget.

Narrative Reports:

- Ministerial Meetings 2023
- COP6 Documents: From TC. COP6.1 to TC. COP6.19
- PreComs to COP6: From PrepCom-1 to Prep Com-8

Protocols:

- Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, Moscow 2018
- Protocol for the Conservation of Biological Diversity, Ashbagat 2014
- Protocol for the protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land Based Sources and Activities, Moscow 2012
- Protocol concerning regional preparedness, response and co-operation in combating Oil Pollution Incidents, Aktau 2011

Key Agreements GRID Ardenal:

- 2019 SSFA Grid Arenal signed
- 2022 PCA Grid Arenal regarding the TC support 28 Jan signed
- Agreement-Amendment English
- SSFA 2017 01 GRID Arenal signed UNEP
- SSFA 2018 03 Grid Signed
- SSFA 2020 Grid
- SSFA UNEP IC signed UNEP 2015
- SSFA UNEP wGRID Arenal TCIS v2 2015 signed UNEP
- SSFA001 UNEP wGRID Arenal TCS2016 - Rev. Signed All
- Caspian Sea State of the Environment 2019
- Caspian Sea State of the Environment 2011

Previous evaluations:

- Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP Project (Interim) Secretariat services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea. By Johannah Bernstein. Evaluation Office of UNEP March 2015.

Reference documents:

- TE UNEP Glossary of results definitions. Version 8. December 2023.
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https://www.unevaluation.org/sites/default/files/file_uploads/Compendium%20of%20Evaluation%20Methods%202022.pdf
- Developmental Evaluation of Results-Based Management at UNFPA. UNFPA Evaluation Office (2019). Link here.
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<https://www.unep.org/resources/report/un-environments-environmental-social-and-economic-sustainability-framework>
- UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade & Development, 2025. Manual for the framework to measure South–South cooperation Technical and procedural aspects for pilot testing. Technical and procedural aspects for pilot testing.
https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsstatinf2025d1_en.pdf
<https://unctad.org/publication/manual-framework-measure-south-south-cooperation>
- UN Office for South-South Cooperation, 2025. Global Report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation. Bridging Horizons and Continents: Forging transformative Pathways in South-South and Triangular Cooperation.
<https://southsouth-galaxy.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2025-Global-Report-on-South-South-and-Triangular-Cooperation.pdf>

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<https://unsouthsouth.org/about/about-sstc/>

ANNEX IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2015 TERMINAL EVALUATION

Project Design:

UNEP should prepare and/or update its guidance on log frames and Theory of Change tools to enable project teams to deepen their understanding about how their projects can generate real change. UNEP should devote more time in the planning process to create a rigorous log frame that incorporates a Theory of Change approach especially in projects which produce “tangible, immediate results.” Different metrics are needed to evaluate project success when the outcomes may not be measurable.

Strategic relevance:

Given the importance of grounding the TC regime in the best available science, it is important that the Permanent Secretariat mobilizes the resources needed to ensure and sustain the TC environmental monitoring activities. UNEP should continue to emphasize to political leaders the merits of regional collective action. UNEP should provide greater support to its regional offices that are responsible for administering convention secretariats.

Achievement of outputs and activities:

UNEP EO should require the inclusion of SWOT analyses in terminal evaluations in conjunction with the reconstructed Theory of Change. UNEP EO should revise its ROTI framework to take into account the impact that assumptions play in the achievement of outcomes, intermediate results and ultimately impact. Scoring should be adapted accordingly.

Effectiveness:

The TCPS must ensure that it maintains its neutrality and objectivity when it is established in the region and most especially when it rotates between host countries. UNEP should scale up its support to its regional offices, especially UNEP ROE, to ensure that it continues to support its member states effectively. UNEP must provide bridging support to the TCPS to ensure continuity and a sufficient level of resources in the re-location to the region. The Parties should encourage their political leaders at the next Caspian Head of State Summit to continue to express their political support for the TC process and especially for the mainstreaming of NCAPs into economic development planning processes. Given the difficulties that Parties currently face in increasing their assessed contributions, the TCPS should place a high-priority on fundraising from the private sector in the region. The TCPS should mobilize a sufficient level of resources to improve their NGO engagement work. In addition, it will be critical for the Permanent Secretariat to be equipped with the necessary resources to support the Caspian countries in strengthening the legal and institutional arrangements for public participation, enhancing access to environmental information and reinvigorating national and regional NGO networks with the necessary resources. Whilst these priorities are addressed in the NPPS, increased effort must be directed towards operationalizing these commitments. This will help to bring the region closer to realizing Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (i.e. the importance of public involvement in sustainable development). As well, those countries that have not yet ratified the Aarhus Convention must be encouraged to do so

³⁶.

³⁶ The Caspian Convention does not require the parties to ratify the Aarhus Convention. However the credibility of the Parties commitment to public participation in the Caspian process is directly tied to their commitment to the Aarhus process.

Sustainability and replication:

UNEP must scale up its efforts to convince governments of the tangible benefits of environment protection. It should leverage its resources and profile to convince governments to implement the TC. Because it is very difficult for the Caspian States to increase their contributions to the TC at this point, UNEP should convince the governments to increase the allocation of their domestic financial resources towards TC activities. This is very important to demonstrate the political will in order to reengage the external donors.

Factors affecting performance:

The TCPS should mobilise extra-budgetary resources to resume the public participation and engagement activities that were commenced under the CaspEco project.

ANNEX V. BRIEF CV OF THE EVALUATOR

Name	Ms. Silvana Denisse Fajardo Pérez
Profession	Master of Science Degree in Ecological Marine Management. Specialization: Marine Pollution and Risk Management. Diploma of Specialist in Environmental Quality Management and Audit. Engineer Diploma – Bachelor of Science in Fisheries Engineer
Nationality	Peruvian
Country experience	• Europe: Belgium and Germany. • Africa: Kenya • Americas: Peru, Brazil, Panama, Barbados, Mexico, Colombia and Ecuador. • Asia: Philippines.
Education	• Advanced Project Design for the Green Climate Fund / FAO – Green Climate Fund (GCF) • Results Based Management (RBM) Course / UNEP Policy and Programme Division • Diploma of Executive Program in Sustainable Finance / Pacific Business School – Pacific University • Diploma of specialization in Finance for Biodiversity / Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) & KOIKA • Governance for Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) / IUCN & UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) • Biodiversity in Environmental Impact Assessment – BEIA / Inter-American Development Bank (INDES) • MOOC on Marine Litter / UNEP • Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Capacity building in ICZM - Workshop for South America / Executive Secretary Convention on Biological Diversity / Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) – UNEP • Master in Climate Change and Sustainable Development / Vertice Campus - Institute of Ecological Research INIECO • Certificate in Management Studies / Haute Ecole Groupe ICHEC - ISC Saint Louis – ISFSC

Ms. Silvana Denisse Fajardo Pérez

A Fishing Engineer with a Diploma on Environmental Quality Management and Audit, a Master of Science in Ecological Marine Management focus on Marine Pollution and Risk Management (obtained in Belgium, where Law of the Sea was included), a Certificate in Business Management Studies, and a second Master in Climate Change and Sustainable Development. I am a professional with sound knowledge of: fisheries, aquaculture and natural resources management; mitigation and adaptation to climate change; environmental, social and gender safeguards (IADB, IFC, AF, LAIF, WB, and GEF); EIA, ESG, ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA); nature-based solutions (NbS); environmental, biodiversity, conservation and climate change policies; MPA, ICZM, MSP, High seas, EIA, carbon and water footprint; ocean acidification, blue and circular economy; sustainable finance and project management. I am a highly motivated +15-year experience professional in ocean and environmental management.

In 2004 I was part of SPDA NGO, where environmental workshops and fair were developed within a project with artisanal fishermen and local community. In addition, I have participated in EIAs elaboration of aquaculture production of scallops. I have also carried out implementation of management systems

(ISO 9001, 14001, 14064, 45001 and OHSAS 18001) in different companies. In 2008 I had the opportunity to work in the European Parliament, which helped me familiarized with marine (fisheries and aquaculture included) and environmental worldwide regulations. Later, I worked as a Marine Ecologist consultant for the Ministry of Environment of Peru, performing policy work and research reports. After, I assisted the NGO Seas At Risk at Belgium which main objective is to ensure conservation of the marine environment. In that opportunity I participated in projects organization and in 2012 Coalition providing policy advisory services to EU Common Fishery Policy Reform (CFPR). Then in 2013, I was in charge of the “Thematic Report on Pollution and Ecosystem Health Module Indicators” within the GEF Humboldt Current Large Marine Ecosystem Project of UNOPS at Lima – Peru.

Afterwards, in 2014, I have been part of Sustainable Cities team, one of the 5 topics of the Internal Agenda at the framework of COP20 Lima – Peru. In 2015, continuing with Ocean theme of the Peruvian Internal Agenda of the Ministry of Environment of Peru (MINAM), we worked a pilot project of Marine Spatial Planning (with NOAA) and Ocean Health Index (collaboration with CI). Furthermore, as part of the Ocean team of MINAM, we were in charge of organized an event in the Peruvian Pavilion at COP21. Moreover, in 2016 I have given external consultancy in environmental and social safeguards following World Bank and Adaptation Fund standards to the Project for islands, islets and guano points. During 2017 and 2018 I have worked in the Vice Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture of Peru giving scientist input in policy decisions in climate change, environmental and social safeguards; as also during the creation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to adaptation of climate change of fisheries and aquaculture sector of Peru. In 2018-2019 I develop a Pre-Assessment of Mangrove Cockles artisanal fishery in Tumbes – Peru for Conservation International Peru, where EbA, value chain analysis and seafood trade issues where consider. Later I developed two consultancies with UNDP GEF Binational Peruvian-Ecuadorian Coastal Fisheries Initiative - Latin America Project (CFI-LA): one service was about the Cockles management and the other was a Marine Litter Project Proposal. Also, I have been a member of IDOM group of professionals to support the creation of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) for Climate Change of Peru – 2019-2020 (leading the fisheries and aquaculture chapter and participating in forest and freshwater topics); as well, in 2021 I developed with GGGI a prototype monitoring system for the NDCs of fisheries and aquaculture of Peru.

During the last years, I have been a consultant for the Vice ministry of Fisheries of Peru in charge of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of DIA, EIAsd, EIAd and PAMA for aquaculture activities, framework of the Supreme Decree No. 012-2019-Produce. Additionally, in 2021, I completed a consultancy with UNEP on “Marine Pollution”, developing a Worldwide Country Survey (having to work with countries of the Caribbean as well) and a report of the status of each country actions on marine pollution 2019-2020. Also, a 55-page worldwide Information Document was given for submission to UNEA-5 with Global Programme for Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA); discussions, conclusions and recommendations where given for specially topics as nutrients, waste water and marine litter. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean region that participated in the study and with the ones I coordinated with its Governments were: Argentina, Anguilla, Belize, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Professional guidance and translation where given to them during the service.

In 2022, I developed for PROFONANPE the “Normative proposal to incorporate the conceptual and methodological framework of the ecological risk assessment of fishery and aquaculture species to climate change for Peruvian government” consultancy, the one was fund by the Adaptation Fund (AF). In 2023 with GCA we concluded for LAIF, the formulation of the project proposal “Implementation of protection technologies for aquaculture activities in 3 Peruvian regions in face of extreme events associated with climate change” with funds of the Adaptation Fund (AF). Finally, in April 2024 two consultancies services were ended. One consultancy service was for the Humboldt II Binational GEF Project Peru - Chile from UNDP, where sustainable value chains and seafood trade of benthonic resources where studied; and the other consultancy was about identification of ecosystem services for Endeavour Silver Terranea Precious Metals mining in Puerto Vallarta- Jalisco, Mexico. Lately 2024, I have ended a consultancy for IICA about Blue Economy and NbS topics. Early 2025 I have finished a consultancy with IICA Brazil where a Gender Diagnosis and a Gender Action Plan (GAP) was prepared to support the proposal to Green Climate Fund (GCF) under the project “Mitigation and adaptation to climate change under agroforestry systems (AFS) in cocoa production in the Amazon and Atlantic Forest biomes”, UNOPS/GCF – Cacau Brazil Agrofloresta (GCF #27840 – IICA), the one has already been approved.

ANNEX VI. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

Evaluand Title: Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP Project “416.3 (Interim) Secretariat Services to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea and SMA ID 3A82, 2015 - 2023” (Administered under PIMS 00270)

All UNEP evaluations are subject to a quality assessment by the Evaluation Office. This is an assessment of the quality of the evaluation product (i.e. evaluation report) and is dependent on more than just the consultant’s efforts and skills.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Section A: Executive Summary	Assessment	
1. Does the Executive Summary act as a concise, accurate standalone section, especially to inform decision-making? Consider how clearly and concisely the report presents: - a clear summary of the evaluation object - evaluation objectives, scope and methodology - the overall project evaluation rating - a summary of main evaluation findings, including key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) - summary responses to key strategic evaluation questions - summary of main conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Most required elements are addressed in the executive summary, except for the summary of main findings and key strategic evaluation questions. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Regarding the key findings and performance rating, while the report provides the narrative of summary of rating in line with criteria, the key findings of the evaluation are not presented. A succinct summary of would strengthen the section.	3.5
Section B: The Project	Assessment	
2. Does the report clearly describe the key parameters, scale and complexity of the evaluand? Consider how well the report presents: - an overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address - timeline, including dates of project approval, duration and number of phases (where appropriate) - geographic coverage (regions/countries) - total secured budget and project financing, including a table with funding sources - implementing and funding partners - institutional context (i.e. UNEP sub-programme, Division, Branch etc) - implementation structure with diagram - UNEP results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. PoW Direct Outcome) - summary of results framework as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) - stakeholder groups organised according to relevant common characteristics - whether the project has been evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, by an external agency, etc.) - substantive or significant changes in design during implementation	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Some information of the evaluand are presented but others (below) are omitted. - timeline, including dates of project approval, duration and number of phases (where appropriate) - geographic coverage (regions/countries) - institutional context - Identification of relevant UNEP results (such as MTS, POS) <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The section succinctly presents an overview of the project, including a comprehensive stakeholder analysis, and project financing information as well as summary result framework table. However, the inclusion of the missing elements listed above will be useful. In addition, a clearer explanation of implementation structure, including key roles and responsibilities for management, implementation, and reporting, would strengthen the section.	3.5
Section C: Evaluation Methods and Theory of Change	Assessment	

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
3. Does the report present a clear, comprehensive and adequate description of the evaluation methodology? Consider how well it presents the following elements, and their adequacy based on the scope of the evaluation: - statement of the purpose of the evaluation and the key intended audience for the evaluation findings - data collection methods and information sources - justification for methods used (e.g. electronic/face-to-face interviews, qualitative/quantitative analysis) - criteria and sampling strategies used to select stakeholders for consultations, and for sites/countries visited - number and types of respondents (<i>including in a table broken down by gender</i>) - strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and response rate - methods used to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. women, marginalised) - data verification methods (e.g. triangulation) - data analysis methods (e.g. scoring, thematic analysis) - evaluation limitations and mitigation measures (e.g. how these were addressed by the evaluator) - consideration for ethics and human rights issues, including how anonymity and confidentiality were protected	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Some key elements such as evaluation purpose and audience, data collection methods. However, justification of methods, sampling strategies, number and types of respondents, strategies to increase the stakeholder engagement and response rate, and methods ensuring the inclusiveness are omitted. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report simply describes the methodology applied for the evaluation and its limitations. However, more detailed information on how the evaluation considered human right issues including anonymity and confidentiality would strengthen the section. In addition, all missing elements listed earlier will be beneficial. Furthermore, missing methods listed above are required to be included, as they are key elements for the section.	3
4. Does the report describe an assessment and reformulation of the Theory of Change, and present an adequate articulation of the TOC causal pathways that were used to assess project performance (<i>narratively and diagrammatically</i>)? Consider how well the report presents: - whether the project design included a TOC - how the <i>TOC at Evaluation</i>³⁷ was designed (e.g. who was involved, etc) - confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions (<i>including reformulation table, which may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear in the Main Evaluation report.</i>) - articulation of causal pathways - identification of drivers and assumptions - identification of key actors in the change process	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report includes most of primary elements. However, it does not explain how the ToC at evaluation was designed. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The section demonstrates the strong articulation of the project's causal pathways, demonstrating the key drivers and underlying assumptions along each pathway. However, the analysis would be strengthened by a more explicit identification of the key actors involved in the change process. In addition, some result statements could be reviewed in line with the UNEP's result definitions (e.g. IS 1- Outcome B)	4.5
Section D: Evidence and Analysis	Assessment	
5. Is the report based on sufficient and adequate data and clear and credible evidence? Consider how well the report presents: sufficient evidence that is consistent	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The finding section covers all criteria in line with UNEP guideline.	3.5

³⁷ During the Inception Phase of the evaluation process a *TOC at Evaluation Inception* is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports etc. During the evaluation process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at Evaluation*.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
throughout the report - evidence that is supported by data sources (e.g. quotes, reports, etc) - evidence that is explicitly triangulated, unless noted as having a single source - gaps in data are explained and justified - data sources that are reliable, adequate, sufficient for the scope of the evaluation	<u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The evaluation assess the project performance based on the standard criteria. Overall, the report should have provided the analysis based on sufficient evidence by triangulating the various sources. Currently, only limited evidence supports each criteria.	
6. Does the report include <i>rigorous analysis</i> and <i>logical findings</i>? Consider the extent to which the findings are: - supported by clear analysis that is consistent with the evidence presented - logical, clear and coherent - aligned with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix - aligned with the evaluation framework - more than descriptions and provide insights into 'how' and/or 'why' the project performed a certain way - balanced, presenting both successes and weaknesses	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The finding section covers all criteria in line with UNEP guideline. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The section is articulated aligning with UNEP's criteria rating matrix and evaluation framework. However, more in-depth analysis and insights into how and or why on the project performance would strengthen the finding section. In general, the finding section should have improved the consistency with the evidence presented, and between statements.	3.5
Section E: Evaluation Findings	Assessment	
7. Does the report present evidence and analysis of project <i>Strategic Relevance</i> with respect to UNEP, partner and geographic policies and strategies at the time of project approval? Consider how well the report addresses: - Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities - Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities - Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities - Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation³⁸), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report includes key elements to explain strategic relevance. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> However, sub-section on alignment to donor strategic priorities explains the no existence of implementing partners. However, noting that implementing partners and donors are different, a proper analysis on alignment to 'donor/partner strategic priorities' could be presented.	4
Does the report present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the Quality of Project Design, based on the detailed assessment presented in the Inception Report?	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The section covers all sub-criteria of the Quality of Project design. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The section succinctly outlines the strengths and weaknesses of the project design quality and provided summary assessments for each sub-criterion based on evidence.	*NOT RATED

³⁸ A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Does the report recognise and describe, when appropriate, key features of the Nature of the External Context under which the project was implemented that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval ³⁹), and how they affected performance?	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The section describes the external context of the project. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report explains the external context of the project, how the project was affected by this context, and how the project addressed and overcame these challenges. The rating was clarified in line with evaluation criteria rating matrix.	*NOT RATED
8. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the Availability of Outputs to the intended beneficiaries? Consider how well the report presents: - a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget - assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets - assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries - identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The section includes all key elements required for the assessment of the availability of outputs. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The section provide comprehensive assessment not only availability/accessibility of outputs, but its quality, utility and level of user ownership. However, indication and analysis of more explicit quantitative achievements against target and identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups would strengthen the section.	4.5
9. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the Achievement of Outcomes, as a result of the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries? This may include behaviour changes at an individual or collective level. Consider how well the report presents: - a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries - assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets - discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself - any constraints to attributing effects to the projects' work - identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report covers most key elements except for identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The section provides achievement of outcome based on evidence. However, more in-depth analysis on behaviour / institutional changes related to each outcome would strengthen the section by referencing triangulated data and information. Indication and analysis of more explicit quantitative achievements against target would increase the clarity of achievements. In addition, identification of positive/negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups would strengthen the section. Lastly, more consistent analysis and	3.5

³⁹ Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
	results would strengthen the section.	
10. Does the report present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to Likelihood of Impact? Consider how well the report presents: - an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and the resulting change processes - an explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out - an explanation of roles played by key actors and change agents - identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report covers most of the key elements required for the assessment, except for identification of any unintended negative effect of the project on disadvantaged group. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The statements of analysis should be consistent throughout the report. However, the statements presented in the Table 15 and Para 121 are mostly inconsistent. In addition, more in-depth analysis and justification on the achievement of intermediate states should be provided. Lastly, more explicit explanation of roles played by key actors and change agents would strengthen the section.	3
11. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under Financial Management and include a completed 'financial management' table? Consider how well the report addresses the following: <i>adherence</i> to UNEP's financial policies and procedures <i>completeness</i> of financial information, including the actual project costs and actual co-financing used and explanation of any variances between planned and actual expenditures	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report covers all key sub-criteria for the assessment of the financial management. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> <i>The findings in the section are supported by the evidence addressed in the report. However, analysis on actual project costs and co-financing used would strengthen the section</i>	4
12. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under Efficiency? Consider how well the report presents: - cost-effective or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe - implications of any delays and no cost extensions - discussion of making use, during project implementation, of/building on pre-existing institutions, partnerships and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. - the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The analysis covers only one elements- implications of any delays and no-cost extensions, and most of elements are not addressed. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The section demonstrates the implications of any delays and no-cost extensions based on the evidence. However, incorporating the efficiency-focused analysis of this aspect would have strengthen the section. For instance, the analysis on cost -effectiveness, discussion of making use of/building on pre-existing institutions, partnerships and complementary with other programme, projects, and initiatives, and management of the project minimised UNEP's environment footprint will strengthen the section.	2.5
13. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the project's	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u>	3

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Monitoring and Reporting? Consider how well the report addresses the following: - the quality of <i>monitoring of project implementation</i> (including use of monitoring data for adaptive management) - the quality of <i>project reporting</i> (e.g. PIMS and donor reports)	The report covers key sub-criteria in the section. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> While the section provides analysis on the quality of monitoring of project implementation and project reporting, the analysis is not sufficiently supported by the evidence. More consistent analysis and evidence-based analysis of the quality of monitoring implementation should be presented. In line with rating criteria listed in the section, in-depth analysis on the quality of reporting should be included.	
14. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under Sustainability (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level)? Consider how well the report addresses the following: - socio-political sustainability - financial sustainability - institutional sustainability	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The section covers all key dimensions for the assessment of sustainability. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Across all three sustainability dimensions, the narratives would benefit from stronger evidence-based analysis to justify the ratings. Currently, many statements are made without sufficient supporting evidence or specific examples.	3.5
15. Does the report present a well-evidence analysis of the Factors Affecting Performance, <u>either in this section or in cross-referenced sections?</u> <i>These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given to where the topic is addressed, and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors.</i> Consider how well the report addresses the following cross-cutting issues: - quality of project management and supervision⁴⁰ - stakeholder participation and co-operation - responsiveness to human rights and gender equality - environmental and social safeguards - country ownership and driven-ness - communication and public awareness	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report includes standard sub-criteria required to assess the factors affecting performance. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report demonstrates how these factors influenced performance and implementation. However, more evidence-based analysis would strengthen the section. In addition, consistency of analysis related to criteria should be ensured. Further analysis on linkages to poverty alleviation or impact on economic livelihood, as well as of planned efforts to minimize the project's environmental footprint, would have strengthened the section.	4
Section F: Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations	Assessment	
16. Do the Conclusions present a summative assessment of the evaluand as a whole, reflecting on prominent aspects of the project's performance? Consider how well the conclusions:	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u>	4

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
- provide a compelling narrative and integrated assessment of project's performance (i.e. achievements and limitations) - add deeper insights and analysis beyond the findings under each individual criterion - are derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the evaluation process - provide clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions - address the human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on) - provide lessons that are rooted in real project experiences, describe the context from which they are derived, and do not duplicate recommendations	The conclusion includes summative assessment of the evaluand as a whole. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The section provides succinct conclusions including summary of project findings and rating table as well as analysis responding to strategic evaluation questions. While the report provides two lessons learned, it does not provide lessons that are rooted in real project experiences, describe the context from which they are derived, and do not duplicate recommendations. Using the standard table for the section will strengthen the content.	
17. Does the report present Recommendations for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results? Consider how well the recommendations: - are clearly formulated and logically derived from the findings and/or conclusions - are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when - include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions - represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. <u>NOTES:</u> (i) In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance. (ii) Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The section presents the recommendations. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report presents recommendations, which are feasible and measurable. However, clearer formulation and logic derived from the findings and or conclusions should have provided by using standard table. The recommendations do not suggest any timeframe	3.5
Section G: Report Structure and Presentation	Assessment	
18. Is the report well-structured and complete? Does it: - follow the Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines - include all required sections and annexes, as applicable - not exceed 50 pages in length from the Executive Summary to the end of the Conclusion Does the report present information clearly and appropriately? Is it written:	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report covers all standard sections and structure in line with the UNEP's evaluation report template except for some missing Annexes such as response to stakeholder comments, environmental and social safeguards assessment,	3.5

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
• in clear and accessible language • largely free from grammar, spelling and punctuation errors • in an adequate and professional tone • with the use of visual aids, such as maps, graphs tables and photos	communication and outreach tools. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Overall, the report is well articulated with proper language and tone. However, the proper proofreading is required for corrections of grammatical errors and clarify of sentences. In addition, more visual aids would be useful.	
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3.5

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion, with half-point increments allowed (e.g., 3.5 or 4.5). Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. The overall rating is based on a simple average of the ratings for each criterion.

* This criterion was not rated to avoid giving it disproportionate weight in calculating the overall score, as this section is typically brief. The remaining criteria are comprehensive and substantial enough to provide a balanced and meaningful overall rating for the report.

Rating the Report Quality Criteria

Rating (1–6)	Description
6	Provides all content with high quality.
5	Provides all content with minor weaknesses.
4	Provides most content with minor weaknesses.
3	Provides most content with significant weaknesses.
2	Omits substantive content with significant weaknesses.
1	Omits almost all content with major weaknesses.