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Mediterranean Action Plan**

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and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols

Izola, Slovenia, 20-21 June 2023

Agenda Item 3: Progress Report for November 2022 – April 2023

Progress Report by the Secretariat on the Activities Carried Out for the Period November 2022 – April 2023

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABNJ	Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction
ACCOBAMS	Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area
ActionMed	Action Plans for Integrated Regional Monitoring Programmes, Coordinated Programmes of Measures and Addressing Data and Knowledge Gaps in Mediterranean Sea
BACs	Background Assessment Concentrations
BAT	Best Available Techniques
BBNJ	Biological diversity of areas Beyond National Jurisdiction
BC	Background Concentrations
BCRS	Barcelona Convention Reporting System
BD	Biodiversity focal area strategy (GEF)
BP	Blue Plan
BWM	Ballast Water Management
BWM Convention	International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments
CAMP(s)	Coastal Area Management Programme(s)
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEDRE	Centre of Documentation, Research and Experimentation on Accidental Water Pollution
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGI SCP	Cyprus, Greece, and Israel joint Sub-regional Marine Pollution Contingency Plan
CIESM	Mediterranean Science Commission (Commission Internationale pour l'Exploration Scientifique de la Méditerranée)
ClimVar & ICZM	Integration of climate variability and change into national strategies for the implementation of the ICZM Protocol in the Mediterranean
CME	Compliance, Monitoring and Enforcement
CMR	Carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction
CNRS-L	National Council for Scientific Research - Lebanon
COP	Conference of Parties
CORMON	Correspondence Group on Monitoring
CPs	Contracting Parties
CS	Civil Society
CU	Coordinating Unit
CVC	Climate Variability and Change
CW	Chemicals and Waste (GEF)
DeFishGear	Derelict fishing Gear Management System in the Adriatic Region
DG MARE	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (EC)
DOALOS	Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea
EACs	Environmental Assessment Concentrations
EASIN	European Alien Species Information Network
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ECA	Emission Control Area
EcAp	Ecosystem Approach

EcAp MED II	Mediterranean Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach, in coherence with the European Union (EU) Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)
EcAp-MED I	Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) in the Mediterranean by the Contracting parties in the context of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols
ECP	Executive Coordination Panel
EDC	Ethylene dichloride
EEA	European Environment Agency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIA Directive	Environmental Impact Assessment Directive
EIB	European Investment Bank
EMODnet	European Marine Observation and Data Network
EMSA	European Maritime Safety Agency
ENI	European Neighborhood Instrument
ENI SEIS II East	implementing the Shared Environmental Information System principles and practices in the Eastern Partnership countries
ENPI	European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument
ENP-South	European Neighborhood Policy-South
EO	Ecological Objectives
ESM	Environmentally Sound Management
ETC/BD	European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity
EU	European Union
EUSAIR	EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FEBEA	European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks
FEDERCHIMICA	Federazione Nazionale dell'Industria Chimica
FEMISE	Forum Euroméditerranéen des Instituts de Sciences Économiques (the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Institutes of Economic Sciences)
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GES	Good Environmental Status
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
GIIN	Green Impact Investing Network Initiative
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GloBallast	Global Ballast Water Management Project
H2020	Horizon 2020 Programme (EU)
HCMR	Hellenic Centre for Marine Research
HELCOM	Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - Helsinki Commission
HELMEPA	Hellenic Marine Environment Protection Association
HNS	Hazardous and Noxious Substances
HW	Hazardous Wastes
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
IMAP	Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
INFO/RAC	Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication
InfoMAP	UNEP/MAP Mediterranean knowledge platform

InforMEA	United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements
Interreg MED	Transnational European Cooperation Programme for the Mediterranean Area
IOGP	International Association of Oil and Gas Producers
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (2014-2020)
ISPRA	Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (Italy)
ITCP	Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUCN-Med	International Union for Conservation of Nature Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation
IUCN-ROWA	International Union for Conservation of Nature Regional Office for West Asia
IW	International Waters (GEF)
IWRS	Institute of Water of the Republic of Slovenia
JRC	Joint Research Centre
LBS	Land Based Sources
MAMIAS	Marine Mediterranean Invasive Alien Species
MAP	Mediterranean Action Plan
MAP II	Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Sustainable Development of the Coastal Areas of the Mediterranean (MAP Phase II)
MaPAMed	Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
MAU	Mediterranean Assistance Unit
MAVA	MAVA Fondation pour la nature
MBP	Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform
MCSD	Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development
MEA(s)	Multilateral Environmental Agreement(s)
MEA-IKM	Multilateral Environmental Agreement Information and Knowledge Management Initiative
MED POL	Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution in the Mediterranean
MEDACES	Mediterranean database on cetaceans stranding
MEDASSET	Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles
MEDCIS	Support Mediterranean Member States towards coherent and Coordinated Implementation of the second phase of the MSFD
MedEcc	Network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change
MedECC	Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change
MEDITS	Mediterranean International Trawl Survey
Medkeyhabitats	Mapping of key marine habitats in the Mediterranean and promoting their conservation through the establishment of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI)
MedPAN	Network of Marine Protected Areas managers in the Mediterranean
MedPartnership	Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem
MedProgramme	GEF Mediterranean Sea Programme: Enhancing Environmental Security
MedSOS	MEDITERRANEAN SOS Network
MENELAS	Mediterranean Network of Law Enforcement Officials relating to MARPOL within the framework of the Barcelona Convention
MIO-ECSDE	Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development
MOIG	Mediterranean Oil Industry Group

MONGOOS	Mediterranean Operational Network for the Global Ocean Observing System
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA(s)	Marine Protected Area(s)
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
MSFD TG ML	MSFD Technical Group on Marine Litter
MSP	Marine Spatial Planning / Maritime Spatial Planning
MSSD	Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development
MTF	Mediterranean Trust Fund (MAP)
MTS	UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021
NAP(s)	National Action Plan(s)
NCPs	National Contingency Plans
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organisation(s)
NIS	Non-Indigenous Species
OFOG	Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group
OSPAR Convention	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic
PAP/RAC	Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre
PBT	Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxic
PCB	Polychlorinated biphenyl
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PEGASO	People for Ecosystem-based Governance in Assessing Sustainable development of Ocean and coast (Project)
PIF	Project Implementation Form
PoM	Programmes of Measures
POSOW	Preparedness for Oil-polluted Shoreline clean-up and Oiled Wildlife interventions
PoW	Programme of Work
PRPI	Pollution Reduction and Prevention Investment
PRTR	Pollutant Release and Transfer Register
QSR	Quality Status Report
RAC(s)	Regional Activity Centre(s)
RCCAF	Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework
RCO	Regional Coordinating Organization
REMPEC	Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea
RMS	Resource Mobilization Strategy
SAP-MED	Strategic Action Programme to Address Pollution from Land-Based Activities in the Mediterranean
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund (GEF)
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDG 14	Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDI	Spatial Data Infrastructure
SDSN-MED	Mediterranean Sustainable Development Solutions Network
SEIS	Shared Environmental Information System
SIMWESTMED	Supporting Implementation of MSP in the Western Mediterranean region
SOI	Sustainable Ocean Initiative
SOx	Sulphur oxides

SPA(s)	Specially Protected Areas
SPAMI(s)	Specially Protected Area(s) of Mediterranean Importance
SPI	Science Policy Interface
SSSUP	Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies of Pisa
SUPrEME	Supporting MSP in the Eastern Mediterranean
SWEEP-Net	Regional Solid Waste Exchange of Information and Expertise Network
SWIM	Sustainable Water Integrated Management
SWITCH-Med	Switching to more sustainable consumption and production in the Mediterranean
TUBITAK	Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey
TUDAV	Turkish Marine Research Foundation
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UfMS	Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP/GPA	UNEP Global Programme of Action
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VPvB	Very Persistent and very Bioaccumulative
WebGIS	Web Geographic Information Systems
WFD	Water Framework Directive (EU)
WWF-MedPO	WWF – Mediterranean Programme Office

I Introduction

1. This report covers the activities and outputs carried out between November 2022 and April 2023. The Reports by the Secretariat on Specific Issues and on Financial and Administrative Issues are prepared as separate documents, namely UNEP/MED BUR.94/6 and UNEP/MED BUR.94/5 respectively. The complementing “Progress Report by the Secretariat on the Implementation of COP 22 Decisions”, is presented as document UNEP/MED BUR.94/4.

II Main Activities/Outputs per Programme of Work (PoW) theme linked to specific outcome

Programme 1. Towards a pollution and litter free Mediterranean Sea and Coast embracing circular economy

Outcome 1.1. Strategies and Action Plans addressing marine litter and plastics developed and implemented through comprehensive, coherent and collaborative approaches

2. MED POL is providing support for the implementation of the updated Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean through the EU-funded Marine Litter MED II Project and the Cooperation Agreement between UNEP/MAP and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security. In the framework of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED has been providing technical support to MED POL for the implementation of the EU-funded “Marine Litter MED II” Project regarding the pilots related II Project, MED POL concluded and signed SSFAs with 9 countries. Adopt-a-beach is implemented in 14 sites in 4 countries. Fishing-for-Litter practices are implemented in three countries with the participation of more than 25 fishing vessels addressing sea-based sources of marine litter undergoing in 6 new ports and marinas. Further to the Cooperation Agreement with the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, two SSFAs are in place with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, and one is under finalization with Albania. Adopt-a-Beach (2 beaches per country) and Fishing-for-Litter (up to 5 fishermen per country) pilot actions are supported and undergoing successfully in two countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro).

3. SCP/RAC (MedWaves) has conducted a capitalisation process for BeMed supported actions in islands, which has been captured in the report Hope for the Future: successful solutions for plastic pollution in the Mediterranean islands by the BeMed-Islands Community. This work contributes to the implementation of several provisions of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter at local level. SCP/RAC (MedWaves) has advanced in providing technical assistance to reduce and prevent the use of single use plastic (SUPs) items in Southern Mediterranean countries through the EU-funded projects Marine Litter Med and WES. In particular, a roadmap to implement extended producer responsibility (EPR) to beverage PET bottles in Morocco has been elaborated, as well as a roadmap tackling SUPs in Lebanon and started the implementation through fostering a voluntary agreement between the Ministry of Environment and the private sector.

4. In Adriatic countries (i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro), SCP/RAC (MedWaves) has concluded three partnership agreements with three municipalities to implement green public procurement in relation to single-use plastics, as well as to engage with hotels and restaurants to reduce SUPs consumption. In order to coordinate activities in the region, a partnership agreement was also established with GIZ.

5. REMPEC and MED POL are collaborating for the implementation of the EU-funded “Marine Litter MED II” Project regarding the pilots related to the enhanced management of marine litter from sea-based sources in ports and marinas in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

Outcome 1.2. A holistic and efficient response to land and sea-based pollution, as a part of overall Ecosystem Approach policy for the Mediterranean, (chemicals, contaminants, eutrophication, noise, oil and emerging pollution) for a sustainable Mediterranean coastal and marine ecosystem is implemented

6. Work is proceeding for the implementation of the EU-funded “Marine Litter MED II” Project regarding the pilots related to the preparation of the Regional Plans on Agriculture, Aquaculture and Urban Stormwater Management, and further to the convening of the first Working Groups Meeting in October 2022. The Contracting Parties agreed, further to their discussions of the first drafts of the Regional Plans, to submit additional comments to the Secretariat. Comments were shared by 31 March 2023. The Secretariat incorporated these comments into final drafts to be presented to the 2nd Working Groups Meeting to be held on 22-23 May 2023 back-to-back with the MED POL Focal Points Meeting. Members of the Working Groups will review the new comments and submit final drafts of the Regional Plans for the consideration of the MED POL Focal Points for submission to the MAP Focal Points for approval. In parallel, MED POL has undertaken a study to enable the Parties to assess the costs of implementation of the main regional and national measures proposed in the three Regional Plans and their socioeconomic benefits. The study will be discussed during the 2nd Working Groups meeting.

7. Regarding the preparation of technical guidelines for supporting implementation of the Regional Plans for urban wastewater treatment and sewage sludge management, MED POL held a Regional Meeting of experts, kindly hosted by the Government of Türkiye, in Ankara on 22 and 23 November 2022. The Meeting discussed and approved the use by the Contracting Parties of three guidelines, on (a) available treatment technologies for urban wastewater and sewage sludge and decision support systems for their selection, (b) on pre-treatment standards of industrial effluents for industries discharging into urban wastewater collection systems, and (c) on regional standards on desalination technologies and available environmental standards for discharging brine to the marine environment. This activity is co-organized by the GEF funded MedProgramme.

8. MED POL updated the Guidelines for Dumping of Inert Uncontaminated Geological Materials which were adopted by the Contracting Parties in COP14 (Portoroz, Slovenia, 8-11 November 2005) in line with the requirements of Articles 4.2 and 6.2 of the Dumping Protocol. Proposed updates based on recent global and regional developments found in the London Convention/London Protocol (LC/LP) were approved with minor modification in the “Meeting to Review the Updated Guidelines for the Dumping of Inert Uncontaminated Geological Materials and Sharing Best Practices to Support Implementation of the Dumping Protocol” held online on 13-14 February 2023. The Meeting recommended sharing with the

MED POL Focal Points for their approval to submit to MAP Focal Points and COP23 for adoption.

9. MED POL is executing Child project 1.1 (Phase 1) under the GEF-funded MedProgramme. Phase 1 of the project aims to implement environmentally sound disposal of 2000 tons of PCBs in eligible Contracting Parties. In this context, an international tender was concluded awarding contracts for the collection, transport and final disposal of Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)-containing equipment of 451 tons in Algeria and of 271 tons in Lebanon. The implementation of the contracts starts in the 2nd quarter of 2023. To this aim, legal agreement with Algeria (SSFA) and national support (SCA) for Lebanon were concluded to facilitate implementation of these contracts. Moreover, MED POL is preparing under Child project 1.1 (Phase 2) the groundwork to undertake a PCB-containing inventory in Algeria, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco and Tunisia. This inventory will be used for prioritisation-setting of the next PCB disposal procurement requests. Inventory and sampling of new persistent organic pollutants (POPs: PFAs, HBCD, SCCPs) is under preparation for Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. Policy roadmaps to update the national legislation to the current commitments under the Stockholm Convention are being drafted. For activities related to mercury, drafting of environmentally sound management plans is planned for Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia as well as the inventory and sampling of potentially mercury-containing thermometers in Lebanon and Tunisia.

10. Inventory on the import and use of new persistent organic pollutants (POPs) (namely PFAs in firefighting foams, HBCD in polystyrene foams and SCCPs in PVC material) were carried out with stakeholders from private and public sector engaged in the three project countries: Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. Sampling protocols, schedule and sample collection kickstarted in April 2023 in Lebanon. Market research on safe alternatives available to replace current hazardous substances is currently underway as well as the development of policy roadmaps to update the national legislation to the current commitments under the Stockholm Convention. Both will be presented at the training events taking place in each country during Q2 and Q3 of 2023.

11. Technical brief for the development of a master-module on plastics and their additives in a circular economy was finalized and a training of trainers was carried out so that professors could implement the course in Universities of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (Master on Environmental Change Management in the Mediterranean). SCP/RAC (MedWaves) also delivered two webinars on 'understanding the circular economy for chemicals in plastics' earlier in 2022. The activity was funded through an agreement with the Basel- Rotterdam-Stockholm Conventions Secretariat (INPLASTICS project).

12. REMPEC organised the Fifth Meeting of the Mediterranean Network of Law Enforcement Officials relating to MARPOL within the framework of the Barcelona Convention (MENELAS) (Floriana, Malta, 22-23 February 2023) that discussed, amongst others, the draft common marine oil pollution detection/investigation report within the framework of the Barcelona Convention and MENELAS prepared by REMPEC that submitted it to the Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Kappara, Malta, 13-15 June 2023) for endorsement. REMPEC has also been liaising with the Secretariat of the RAMOGE Agreement to explore the possible participation of Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to a coordinated aerial surveillance operation for illicit ship pollution discharges in the Mediterranean (OSCAR-MED).

13. REMPEC organised two national workshops on the assessment of management capabilities and national systems to respond to marine oil pollution and on the implementation of improvement plan in Egypt (22-23 November 2022) and Israel (18-19 April 2023), which completed the organisation of the 11 national workshops organised in the Mediterranean.

14. REMPEC organised the kick-off meeting to launch the operationalisation of synergy activities between the Sub-regional Contingency Plans (SCPs) as well as the Ad Hoc Meeting on the preparation of the 2024 real case exercise within the Sub-regional marine oil pollution contingency plan between Cyprus, Greece and Israel (SCP CGI) in the margins of the 5th Adriatic Conference on spill prevention, preparedness and response (ADRIASPILLCON 2023) (Opatija, Croatia, 16-18 May 2023).

15. In accordance with the programme for the development of the Adriatic Sub-regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan (SCP), REMPEC organised the First Meeting of the National Authorities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy, Montenegro, and Slovenia in charge of the development of the SCP (Durres, Albania, 8-9 November 2022) and the Second Meeting (Opatija, Croatia, 17-18 May 2023). REMPEC initiated the preparations for the Third and last Meeting aimed at approving the draft SCP, the Multilateral Agreement on the SCP, and the Implementation Programme of the SCP, which will be held in Italy in November 2023. REMPEC also established contact with the EU co-funded NAMIR project to coordinate efforts and establish synergies in the Adriatic region.

16. REMPEC, with the support of Cedre, edited the final version of the 'Condensates-Chemical Intervention Guide for the Mediterranean', and submitted it to the Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Kappara, Malta, 13-15 June 2023) for endorsement.

17. REMPEC provided support to Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia to participate in the RAMOGEPOL 2023 Exercise (Toulon, France, 9-11 May 2023) organised by the RAMOGE Agreement.

18. Plan Bleu/RAC is finalizing activities for the establishment of a State of Play of Desalination under the WESR Med observatory; for this purpose, it acquired the updated DesalData database from Global Water Intelligence. Collaboration continues with the Agence Française de Développement on a decision support tool for sustainable desalination investments.

Outcome 1.3. Systemic approaches for Circular Economy, eco-innovation as well as Sustainable Consumption and Production incorporated into key sectors of activity which are main sources of pollution

19. SCP/RAC (MedWaves) has continued the implementation of The Switchers Support Programme with the aim of developing and supporting sustainable business development in the Mediterranean countries. The Switchers Support National Partnerships (SSNPs) are established in 8 Southern Mediterranean countries bringing together 100+ private and public Business Support Organizations (BSOs) supporting the creation of sustainable businesses. Regional exchange and networking have been enhanced between BSOs. The Switchers Toolbox continues to make available for entrepreneurs, businesses, experts

and BSOs sustainable business development tools and methodologies and counts with 6,400+ green entrepreneurs, 350+ experts and almost 200 BSOs as registered users. In collaboration with local BSOs, SCP/RAC (MedWaves) has reached 1,300 Green Entrepreneurs trained for Sustainable Business Development (52% women) and 117 Green Start-ups being incubated (56% women) in 10 countries.

20. The Switchers Support Programme offer has been increased with two new services with the objective of fostering market deals along specific value chains. The Open Innovation Platform and methodology has enabled BSO and innovation enablers to launch business development challenges in the sector of Textiles & Fashion. More than thirty challenges have been launched and seven of them successfully matched with solutions offered by entrepreneurs and start-ups. Solutions have been supported with technical support and received an innovation vouchers of 20.000 €. Next phase will enable innovation challenges in the sectors of sustainable tourism and food processing.

21. Access to market services have been also enhanced via the Switchers Products Platform, a web tool displaying green products and services, coupled with a direct and digital marketing strategy. The Switchers Community's member will be supported to upload their products and services and to establish contacts with retailers and corporate buyers.

22. An intensive dissemination and awareness-raising activity on Access to Sustainable Finance have been carried out in the period covered by this report. National task forces have been set up in Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Palestine, providing information and knowledge on the opportunities offered by the green transition in the Mediterranean. Four National Outlooks on Sustainable Finance have been published covering the experience of the task forces. At regional level a policy brief to support the establishment of a Sustainable Finance Observatory has been released and Guidelines on Sustainable Access to Finance have been completed and expected to be published by July 2023.

23. A public-private fund facility will be soon launched in cooperation with SEFEA Impact, an Italian fund manager which will increase funding operation and investments of the SwitchersFund, created within the framework of the Switchers Support Programme. The fund's governance setting and business plan has been finalized; external financial institutions engaged to support the first investment round of the fund.

Outcome 1.4. One Health approach developed and implemented, linking human and ecosystems health with pollution reduction and prevention, taking into account lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic

24. Plan Bleu is in contact with Université de Nice, Institut de Recherche et de Développement, and Tour du Valat, to agree on 3 different potential collaborations for development of a One Health approach.

25. The Secretariat further promoted the work on the designation of the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter (Med SOx ECA) in various fora, notably at the REMPEC side event entitled "Mediterranean efforts to reduce ship air pollution" held in the margins of the UNFCCC COP 27 (Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 15 November 2022), the 1st Steering Committee Meeting of the SAFEMED V Project (Lisbon, Portugal, 23 November 2022), the UNEP/MAP-REMPEC side event entitled "Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter: The Mediterranean experience (Med SOx ECA)" and the informal meeting on the possible designation of the Northeast Atlantic as an Emission Control Area held in the margins of the 79th Session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO)'s Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 79) (London, UK, 12-16 December 2022), and to the Med SOx ECA compliance workshop organised by Danish NGOs/authorities (Copenhagen, Denmark, 22 May 2023).

26. Following the submission of the joint and coordinated proposal on the designation of the Med SOx ECA, set out in the Annex to Decision IG.25/14, on 4 February 2022, by France, on behalf of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and the Member States of the European Union, to the 78th session of the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 78) (London, UK, 6-10 June 2022), which endorsed the proposal and approved the related draft amendments to Annex VI to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), the UNEP/MAP Coordinator subsequently sent letters to all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in relation to the implementation of Decision IG.25/14, especially encouraging them to actively participate, in line with a pre-agreed common approach, in the deliberations on the draft amendments to MARPOL Annex VI concerning the Med SOx ECA at MEPC 79, in accordance with the road map.

27. The President of the Bureau and representatives from the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention as well as the UNEP/MAP Coordinator and a representative from REMPEC attended MEPC 79, which adopted the amendments to MARPOL Annex VI concerning the Med SOx ECA, with an expected date of entry into effective application on 1 May 2025. The President of the Bureau and the UNEP/MAP Coordinator had a bilateral meeting with the IMO Secretary General, Mr Kitack Lim, in the margins of MEPC 79 to discuss issues of common interest.

28. REMPEC followed up on the draft national reports on the assessment of the needs that it had submitted to the Contracting Parties that had not yet ratified MARPOL Annex VI, and on its subsequent consultations with Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon and Libya, with a view to finalising these reports, including the respective work plans and timetables related to their ratification and effective implementation of MARPOL Annex VI as well as their implementation of the Med SOx ECA.

29. REMPEC submitted the draft regional fund-raising strategy to support Mediterranean coastal states in relation to the ratification and effective implementation of MARPOL Annex VI, as well as the implementation of the Med SOx ECA and linked compliance measures, to the First Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) (Floriana, Malta, 29 November-1 December 2022), which established a joint intersessional working group for Common Strategic Objective (CSO) 2 (climate change) and CSO 3 (air emissions from ships). REMPEC also continued its dialogue with relevant stakeholders to provide technical support, through technical cooperation and capacity-building activities, including financial support and resource mobilisation activities, to address Contracting Parties' needs.

30. Regarding other aspects of the implementation of Decision IG.25/14, REMPEC invited all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to nominate their representatives serving on the Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x) ECA(s) Technical Committee of Experts tasked with developing and validating Terms of Reference for a specific Technical and Feasibility Study to assess the relevant existing studies and gather further knowledge on the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Nitrogen Oxides (Med NO_x ECA).

Programme 2. Towards Healthy Mediterranean Ecosystems and Enhanced Biodiversity

Outcome 2.1. Ecosystem resilience improved through restoration of those with best regeneration potential

31. Plan Bleu/RAC is one of the main partners of the Interreg Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection Community (MBPC) in charge of capitalization activities. On 18 November 2022, in the framework of cooperation with the Permanent Secretariat of Pelagos, the MBPC organized a technical workshop on the theme: "The Community for the Protection of Biodiversity in the Mediterranean in action: supporting the conservation of cetaceans in the Pelagos Sanctuary". This event presented interesting results and tools from the MBPC projects, which could be useful to the Pelagos Agreement and be offered to competent authorities to help them achieve their management objectives in the years to come. As planned, the final event of the MBPC took place in Brussels on 2-4 November 2022, entitled: "The Mediterranean leading the way: A cooperative framework to strengthen area-based nature conservation actions" in order to share the results of several years of work, including community tools, experiences, lessons learned and best practices that will contribute to regional biodiversity conservation goals and climate agendas

32. Plan Bleu is partner of the consortium which was awarded an EuroMed follow-up project entitled Dialogue4Nature. This will allow to continue developing activities to promote ecosystem restoration and nature-based solutions (see project fiche)

33. The kick-off meeting of the wetlands restoration EU Horizon 2020 WaterLANDS project unfolds. On 26 October 2022, the Horizon 2020 WaterLANDS project and the Interreg NWE Care-Peat project organized a joint event in Brussels to discuss the recommendations developed under a policy guidance document with stakeholders and to advocate for stronger targets for peatlands in new proposed EU nature restoration law. This event entitled: "'For Peat's Sake', Strengthening Peatlands Targets in the EU Nature Restoration Law" included a technical seminar on peatlands followed by a high-level political event organized by MEP Jutta Paulus. This event highlighted the crucial role of peatlands for biodiversity, carbon storage, water cycles and climate resilience across Europe. In partnership with ERINN Innovation and the Tour du Valat, Plan Bleu participated in the production of a video on Mediterranean wetlands and their importance in the new European bill on nature restoration. On 8 November 2022, Plan Bleu/RAC represented the WaterLANDS project to share its activities during a side event at the COP14 of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in Geneva, Switzerland. From 26 to 29 April 2023, Plan Bleu/RAC attended the annual general meeting of the WaterLANDS project in Sofia, Bulgaria, to present the results of the report on governance systems for successful ecological restoration of wetlands. Plan Bleu/RAC released end May 2023 a publication entitled "Characterising supportive governance and policy"

34. The UNEP Ecosystems division funded a preliminary study to define the terms of reference for a regional project on restoration and sustainable management of the Mediterranean forests. Plan Bleu/RAC prepared the concept note, which is currently under presentation to UNEP leadership, before defining a strategy of submission to potential donors.

Outcome 2.2. Comprehensive, coherent Mediterranean network of well-managed MPAs and OECMs in place, expanded, effective and sustainable

35. The post-2020 roadmap for Mediterranean MPAs, part of the MPA forum collaborative process, which aim is to support the implementation of goals committed at global and regional levels such as the Regional Strategy on MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean, is finalised in English, and translated into French and Arabic. The three versions, with the MPA Forum layout, will be launched soon.

36. A study aiming at assessing the objectives and complementarities among different area-based conservation measures and developing recommendations for new designations to enhance their connectivity and effectiveness is being launched in June 2023 by SPA/RAC. The study is aimed to be presented at a workshop on OECMs planned for the second semester 2023.

37. Under the EU-funded IMAP-MPA Project, SPA/RAC is carrying out a regional capacity building programme for improving Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas (MPA) management and ensuring their sustainability, focusing on two main topics (management effectiveness of MPAs and the socio-economic value of MPAs). As the second part of this regional capacity-building programme, a second training course on "Socio-economic Sustainability of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas" was held in Gokova, Dalaman, Türkiye as follows: (i) 13 November 2022: training for Mentors (one of the participants who have a senior profile with excellent knowledge of the MPA situation in their country); and (ii) 14–18 November 2022: training for all the proposed participants, including Mentors, for 5 days, including a one-day field trip. 22 participants from 7 countries (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Türkiye) joined the training developed and delivered by 4 women trainers.

38. Following the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its related Monitoring framework, the Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) experts supported SPA/RAC in developing a draft Evaluation and Monitoring framework for the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean, to be submitted to the 16th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points. The draft framework was discussed by dedicated working group formed by AGEM voluntary members that met online on 31 March and 5 April 2023.

39. Within the framework of the EU-funded IMAP-MPA project, SPA/RAC has been jointly collaborating with the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency in the development of a National MCPAs/OECMs Strategy for the Mediterranean Egyptian Coast. The draft national strategy is being produced considering both conservation objectives and the requirement for MPAs to be integrated within their economic and social environment, based on a consultation process involving related stakeholders at

national and local levels. It will be discussed during a consultation workshop with relevant stakeholders on the beginning of June 2023.

40. Under the same EU-funded IMAP-MPA project, SPA/RAC continued supporting the relevant national authorities of Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia in developing and/or updating and implementing the management plans of Rachgoun Island future MPA (Algeria), Tyre Coast Nature Reserve (Lebanon), Shash MPA (Libya), Jbel Moussa future MPA (Morocco) and Kerkennah Islands future MCPA (Tunisia). This support included several types of activities covering local stakeholders' engagement, improving effective management, surveillance, monitoring, ensuring sustainable financing, communication, awareness-raising, capacity-building, networking and exchange of experience and best practices.

41. Under the GEF Child Project 3.1 in Libya, the draft law on protected areas elaborated in joint collaboration between by SPA/RAC and the Ministry of Environment has been endorsed by the national stakeholders and adapted and tailored by the legislative department of the Ministry of Environment to the appropriate format in December 2022. In March 2023, the draft law has been channelled through the official procedures of the government and submitted to the parliament for adoption by 2023. On the other hand, under the same GEF Child Project 3.1, SPA/RAC and the Ministry of Environment of Libya have revised the terms of reference in view of launching in May/June 2023 a call for consultants to update the National Strategy on MCPAs in line with the global and Mediterranean agendas and targets including the identification and reporting of OECMs.

42. Following a decision by COP 21, SPA/RAC has developed the adopted "Updated Format for the periodic review of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs)" into an online bilingual "SPAMI Evaluation System". The SPAMI Evaluation System was tested during the 2022-2023 SPAMI ordinary review and feedback was provided by the evaluation teams to SPA/RAC.

43. The SPA/BD or MAP Focal Points of Albania, Algeria, France and Italy were contacted early 2023 in order to launch the SPAMI ordinary reviews of the five concerned SPAMIs: Karaburun Sazan National Marine Park (Albania), Banc des Kabyles Marine Reserve (Algeria), Habibas Islands (Algeria), Calanques National Park (France), and Portofino Marine Protected Area (Italy). Mixed national-independent Technical Advisory Commissions were established by the national authorities and SPA/RAC, and evaluation processes were run for the concerned SPAMIs during March and April 2023, except for the Albanian SPAMI, for which SPA/RAC calls to appoint the necessary team (including a national SPA/BD Focal Point) remained unanswered. Consequently, only the outcomes of the ordinary reviews of Algerian, French and Italian SPAMIs will be presented for consideration by the 16th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points.

44. SPA/RAC awarded four sub-grants to involve local civil society organisations (CSOs) in the management and sustainable development in and around SPAMIs, through the implementation of on-field activities two (2) in the Tyre Coast SPAMI (Lebanon) and Kneiss Islands SPAMI (Tunisia). Two additional CSOs acting in Lebanon were also selected and awarded sub-grants to improve the management in Tyre MPA. SPA/RAC is also coordinating activities to scale-up good practices and enable networking among SPAMI managers, particularly through a dedicated twinning programme.

45. Twinning between the Tyre Coast SPAMI (Lebanon) and Medes Islands SPAMI (Spain) and between the Kneiss Islands (Tunisia) and Parc Marin de la Côte Bleue SPAMI (France) are ongoing; Four (4) visits to the concerned SPAMIs have been organized to exchange best practices among managers and with local stakeholders.

46. Consultation for the designation of a specialized firm to maintain and improve the SPAMI Collaborative Platform was launched in May 2023.

Outcome 2.3. Mediterranean endangered and threatened species and key habitats in favourable status of conservation

47. SPA/RAC will sign in May/June 2023 a new financing agreement (external funds) focusing on the implementation of the 2022-2023 and 2024-2025: The Global Environment Facility (GEF) "Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean (FishEBM MED)" project. The main objective of the project is to reverse the over-exploitation of select commercial living marine resources in the Mediterranean by enhancing the capacity of Mediterranean countries to manage fisheries. The project will be implemented by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), UNEP/MAP and SPA/RAC, with oversight from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNEP as the GEF Implementing Agencies. The project officially launched in February 2023 with an inception workshop and first Project Steering Committee meeting held in hybrid modality at the FAO headquarters and online.

48. A multidisciplinary group of experts has been established through the designation by the Contracting Parties of national experts with experience in phytoplankton, zooplankton and oceanography (Hydrology, Chlorophyll-a, etc.). The group met on 5 April 2023 to define parameters allowing to use phytoplankton and zooplankton for relevant IMAP biodiversity indicators and elaborate the List of Reference of Pelagic Habitat Types in the Mediterranean Sea so that it can be used, where necessary, as a basis for identifying reference pelagic habitats to be monitored and assessed at the national level under the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria. The draft report of the online meeting with the conclusions and recommendations is presented as working documents to the 16th SPA/BD Focal Points meeting in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 23 for consideration.

49. The call for consultancy for the desk studies of the most important marine caves to be studied in Tunisia and Morocco are disseminated in May 2022 and the studies are planned to be ready by September 2023. A training will be organised during the summer 2023 (end of June) in collaboration with ATUTAX NGO. It will be organised back-to-back with a workshop to discuss progress towards common monitoring methods that could be considered for caves, including modern technologies. Furthermore, a contract was signed with the institute of marine biology (Montenegro) to contribute to the implementation of IMAP through the execution of the national monitoring programme in MPAs including the site concerned by the Medkeyhabitats I project (Platamuni, MPA and Ratac). The final report including all georeferenced collected data is expected by the end of 2023.

50. For Tunisia and following a discussion with the focal point, two contracts will be signed with two NGOs: (a) with “Méditerranée Action Nature” (MAN) to establish a monitoring point for Posidonia meadows in La Galite MCPA and to revisit the monitoring point in Cap Negro – Cap Serrat Site (Medkeyhabitats I). Activities will be implemented in June 2023, and (b) with “Notre Grand Bleu” (NGB) to revisit the monitoring points of Posidonia meadows. Activities will be implemented in June 2023.

51. SPA/RAC is supporting the Contracting Parties to implement their national monitoring programmes in line with the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) and to enhance knowledge on marine key habitats and strengthen monitoring at national level. MoA were signed under the EU-IMAP-MPA project to contribute to the implementation of IMAP through the execution of the national monitoring programme in MPAs including the site concerned by the Medkeyhabitats I project and in high pressure areas, including the provision of related quality assured data, as well as respective national reporting using the IMAP Info System.

52. SPA/RAC has contributed to the CAMP Bosnia and Herzegovina by implementing the sub-activity to prepare a document/report: “Marine species and habitats in the territorial waters of BiH, issues, monitoring, protection and future financing”.

53. The results of the Bycatch Monitoring programme as well as the results of the bycatch mitigation measures and best practices from the MedBycatch project were shared during the 4th Colloque on Sea Turtles France Group (La Grande Motte, France, 18 November 2022), the 45th session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, GFCM (Tirana, Albania, 7-11 November 2022) and the GFCM Subregional Committee for the central Mediterranean (Tunis, Tunisia, 28 to 30 March 2023).

54. With reference to the bilateral Cooperation Agreement signed between UNEP/MAP and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security to implement the MAP Programme of Work (PoW 2022-2023) a sea turtles rescue centre twinning programme has been launched as follows: Albania-Italy/ Libya-Tunisia/ Lebanon-France. The programme mainly includes exchange visits between the rescue centres staff to improve their scientific and technical knowledge as well as logistical measures. A first exchange visit took place from 11 to 12 April 2023 at la Grande Motte in France, between the French Centre for the Study and Protection of Mediterranean Sea Turtles (CEST Med) and the sea turtles rescue centre of the SPAMI Tyre Natural Reserve (Lebanon). With this regard, a review of available data on marine turtles stranding in the Mediterranean is under preparation.

55. Under the MAVA marine turtles project, SPA/RAC, has organised a sub-regional training on marine turtle rescue and networking at the Lampedusa Turtle Rescue Centre from 15 to 19 November 2021. Lectures and practical sessions on onboard first aid, sampling techniques, turtle rescue surgery and necropsy have been delivered to 10 Marine turtle specialists and veterinarians from Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Lebanon. As lead of this project, SPA/RAC has coordinated the elaboration of the final Project technical report during the Steering committee held in Tunisia from 15 to 17 November 2022.

56. In order to reinforce national capacity on seabird monitoring, SPA/RAC contributed to the organization of the bird winter census implemented by the AAO (BirdLife Partner in Tunisia), and Tour du Valat, in a training format where participants from Mediterranean countries took part. Moreover, SPA/RAC has supported the bird winter census implemented by Libyan Society for Birds under the coordination of the Ministry of Environment.

57. Within the 2nd phase of the EU funded Marine Litter MED project, SPA/RAC supported the implementation of the national monitoring programme of CI 24 in Lebanon and Tunisia, as well as the elaboration, in close consultation with MEDPol and INFO/RAC, of Data Standards (DS) and Data Dictionaries (DD) for IMAP Ecological Objective 10 (EO10) Common Indicator 24 (Ingestion and Entanglement on Marine Turtles), presented as information document during this meeting.

58. As planned by the 2022-2023 POW, the updated Regional Action Plan on seabirds listed in Annex II to SPA/BD protocol and its implementation assessment are elaborated as well as the Mid-term evaluation of the Monk seal regional strategy implementation in the Mediterranean and presented as Working Documents to the 16th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points,

59. The final report of dolphin population in the northern area of Tunisia within the INTERMED Project was prepared.

60. Following the compilation of the preparatory phase, the Monk seal Alliance approved the full project proposal “Med-Monk Seal” project: Enhancing knowledge and awareness on monk seal in the Mediterranean” in December 2022. The overall objective of the Project is to support the Contracting Parties of the south Mediterranean countries to implement the Priority Goals stated in the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Mediterranean Monk Seal.

61. As Partner to the EU funded QUIETMED 2 project, SPA/RAC contributed to: (i) the elaboration of its deliverables 2 and 4 which are respectively the “Setting of EU Threshold Values for impulsive underwater sound – recommendations from the Technical Group on Underwater noise” and the “Background document: executive summary of TG Noise; recommendations for EU threshold values for impulsive and continuous underwater sound” (ii) The organization, in collaboration with ACCOBAMS, of 2-day training on Data reporting/Data Call, tools developed, use of collected noise data, held back-to-back to the Summit on the underwater noise management latest updates (Fuente Álamo, Spain, 14 – 16 March 2023).

Outcome 2.4. Non-indigenous species introductions minimized and introduction pathways under control.

62. The assessment and the updating of the Regional Action Plan on non-indigenous species and species introduction are elaborated and presented as working document to the 16th meeting of SPA/RAC Focal Points before submission to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 23 for consideration. The updating took into consideration the Ballast water management strategy for the Mediterranean Sea (2022-2027).

63. The elaboration of Guidelines for controlling the vectors of introduction into the Mediterranean of NIS and invasive marine species and Guide for risk analysis assessing the impacts of the introduction of NIS updated taking into account the Mediterranean BWM, reviewed by REMPEC, is in progress and should be finalised by the end of 2023.

64. Egypt and Libya have proposed activities which are under finalization, along the following lines: (a) Libya - Awareness days on blue crab to be organised during the summer of 2023. The activity will be organised, after consultation with the Libyan focal point, with Libyan Society for Artisanal Fishery Friend (LSAFF); (b) Egypt: the study of buffer fish will be implemented during summer 2023 by the Arab Union for Sustainable Development and the Environment (AUSDE) after consultation with the national SPA/BD focal point.

65. MAMIAS web application is planned to be deployed on the SPA/RAC production server during summer 2023 in order to be tested with selected user before its official release and use during planned national training on data collection on NIS within the new GEF FISHEBM Med project.

66. REMPEC started the process, in consultation with IMO, to support the harmonisation of procedures in the Mediterranean pursuant to the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM Convention), following the adoption of the Ballast Water Management Strategy for the Mediterranean Sea (2022-2027), and to support the development of a resources mobilisation strategy to implement the said Strategy. Logistical arrangements were secured for the back-to-back Regional Workshop on the BWM Convention and the Regional Expert Meeting on the harmonisation of procedures in the Mediterranean pursuant to the BWM Convention (20-23 March 2023, Kappara, Malta).

Programme 3. Towards a Climate Resilient Mediterranean

Outcome 3.1. Legal, policy and institutional framework strengthened at the regional and national level to efficiently address climate change related challenges (flooding, erosion, land degradation, pollution, disasters etc.)

67. Within GEF/SCCF project funded by a Special Climate Change Fund of GEF, PAP/RAC has been implementing activities related to coastal adaptation to climate change in complement to the activities of GEF MedProgramme in Montenegro and Morocco. Presentations of the climate change issues were included in all meetings related to the preparation of the Coastal Plans for Boka Kotorska in Montenegro and Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima in Morocco, and national experts in the field have been recruited to work together with the other national team members. The activities are being implemented in close cooperation with Plan Bleu. All workshops organised with national stakeholders (until now three in each country) used the "Climagine" participatory method to obtain their feedback. The same approach will be followed until the end of the project foreseen for end of 2023.

Outcome 3.2. Nature-based, technical solutions promoting prevention or reduction of the impact of climate change on coastal and marine ecosystems and increase resilience to climatic variability and change

68. Plan Bleu/RAC and SPA/RAC worked with partners involved in the IUCN Congress's Mediterranean Pavilion, to synthesize and publish the knowledge displayed during the events which have been taking place on this pavilion, with a strong focus on nature-based solutions. A catalogue of Mediterranean Nature-Based solutions has been published.

69. Following the signature of the agreement between UNEP/MAP and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, which secured funding for a pilot in one Mediterranean country to mobilise and implement innovative solutions to reduce GHG emissions from ships in selected ports, including energy efficiency and decarbonisation, REMPEC is preparing a study on the opportunities for greening regular passenger and freight lines between France and Algeria.

70. One of the issues raised during the Climagine workshops in Montenegro and Morocco was the need to prepare a guidance document on possible nature-based solutions for adaptation taking into account different coastal typologies. PAP/RAC has initiated this methodological work in early 2023 to be presented in its draft version at the FPs meeting and finalise as soon as possible

Outcome 3.3. Better understanding and knowledge of climate change and its impacts on environment and development

71. MedECC Secretariat continues coordinating work for the elaboration of the three Special Reports: 1) Climate and environmental coastal risks, 2) Climate-water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus, and 3) Environmental change, conflicts and human migration. The First Order Draft was circulated for comments and suggestions to the registered MedECC scientific reviewers, and the Summary for Policy-Makers to the MedECC community, in May 2023. The Zero Order Draft of the two other reports is currently under coordinated review by all authors. The First Order Draft, and the Table of Contents of the two Zero Order Draft, have been submitted to Plan Bleu Focal Points meeting as InfoDoc.

72. Plan Bleu/RAC is a partner in the successful consortium which applied to the European Environment Agency's call for the European Topic Center on Climate Adaptation. Plan Bleu contributes to the task related to drafting the report on challenges and solutions related to climate change in Europe's seas.

73. The Mediterranean Pavilion was held during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Egypt in November 2022 as detailed in the Specific Issues report.

Outcome 3.4. Mitigation of Climate Change progressed through Circular Economy, increased resource efficiency and carbon neutrality business strategies

74. SCP/RAC (MedWaves) and Plan/Bleu/RAC supported, technically and financially, the Mediterranean Pavilion, hosted at COP27 in Sharm el Sheikh. The Pavilion hosted two side-events, led by SCP/RAC (MedWaves), focusing on the link between SCP, Circular Economy and Climate Change mitigation strategies. The two events (1.5 Degree Lifestyle: sustainable consumption policies enabling climate action in the Mediterranean & Realizing circularity for a just transition towards net-zero economies in the Mediterranean) highlighted the importance of sustainable consumption and production patterns to achieve net-zero economies in the Region and will be used as starting point to further analyse the nexus between Circular Economy and climate change mitigation strategies.

Programme 4. Towards the sustainable use of coastal and marine resources including circular and blue economy**Outcome 4.1. Sustainability of coastal and marine resources achieved through the synergetic implementation of planning and management approaches, including the adequate consideration of Land-Sea Interactions (LSI)**

75. The work on the the preparation of regional Coastal plan (Schéma régional du littoral) for the region Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima in Morocco and Boka Kotorska Bay in Montenegro progresses well. In this reporting period, the activities were focused on the preparation of thematic documents by the national expert teams, with regular consultations with all relevant national and local stakeholders.

76. Back-to-back with the Plan Bleu/RAC's workshop on coastal risks, held in Tangier on 7 December 2022, PAP/RAC organized, on 8 December 2022, a coordination meeting on the progress of preparation of the coastal management plan, along with more than 40 regional Moroccan stakeholders, as well as partners from Plan Bleu/RAC, GWP-Med and MedProgramme Coordinating Unit. Several coordination issues were clarified and good progress with all PAP/RAC-led activities could be stated.

77. On 4 April 2023, representatives of three municipalities overlooking the Boka Kotorska Bay - Herceg Novi, Kotor and Tivat - met with PAP/RAC and Montenegrin Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Development and Urbanism officials, to jointly discuss the progress made in the development of the Coastal Management Plan for Boka Kotorska Bay and agree on the best way forward.

78. Launching of the National ICZM Strategy for Lebanon was on hold for an entire year due to the difficult economic and financial situation in the country. Still, regular online exchanges with the GEF Operational FP and PAP FP were held, which finally allowed to join forces with colleagues from GWP-Med, IHP-UNESCO and Plan Bleu and hold a Multi-Stakeholder Consultations, in Beirut, on 27-28 February 2023. Wide and committed participation of the numerous stakeholders coming from different governmental and non-governmental organisations, academia and private sector allowed to discuss solutions, interlinkages and priorities for water, energy, food, and environment, including coastal zone and its aquifers. One day before, on 26 February 2023, PAP/RAC team held a progress meeting to discuss several other MedProgramme activities contributing directly to the National ICZM Strategy i.e. comparative assessment of the coastal legislation in Lebanon, preliminary calculations of the land cover change, and the findings of the ICZM Strategy scoping phase.

79. Within the Transboundary CAMP for the Otranto area, the first workshop and awareness raising event took place in Vlora, Albania, on 26 January 2023 as an opportunity for stakeholders and local actors (including prefecture, municipalities, academic institutions, local agencies, civil society) to be informed about the progress made so far, as well as tackling relevant topics like the recycling of fishing gear. A two-day event in the Puglia region, including the third meeting of the CAMP Steering Committee, Mid-Term Conference and ICZM training, is planned for 10-11 May 2023.

80. The second Steering Committee meeting of the CAMP Israel took place online on 7 November 2022 to discuss workplan and timeline until May 2023 and prepare the first face-to-face meeting, which took place in Tel Aviv, on 24-25 January 2023, to ensure the involvement and active participation of the coastal municipalities in the project. This first face-to-face meeting included a training session on ICZM for coastal communities, focused on the basic principles of ICZM and an overview of the constraints and opportunities for implementing ICZM in costal municipalities of Israel. The training, which raised great interest among local stakeholders and actors, was concluded with a session on Ecological Footprint (EF) as an opportunity to learn more about the EF concept and methodology, as one of the broadly used measures of humanity's effect upon the environment.

81. CAMP Israel was promoted during a side-event entitled 'Coastal cities at the forefront of climate change' organized on 17 November 2022 by Coastal Authorities Forum Israel and Tel Aviv University as part of the Mediterranean Pavilion at COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Its relevance for an improved management of the Israeli shores was highlighted by the Israeli Minister of Environmental Protection.

Outcome 4.2. Sustainable Blue and Green Economy tools and approaches in the context of Sustainable Development and MSSD implementation

82. The Secretariat has continued working on the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy of Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-2025 and has initiated the process of MSSD review. In this respect, the 24th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Athens, Greece, 14-15 December 2022) reviewed the progress of the work of the MCSD and implementation of the MSSD a, including inter alia: Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and Sustainable Consumption and Production Indicators, MSSD Flagship Initiatives (Sustainability Awards, MedECC, Environmental Governance), and MED 2050 Foresight Study. The MCSD Steering Committee reviewed the proposals by the Secretariat about the MSSD Review Process, which is expected to be launched during the next biennium (2024-2025), the latter corresponding also with the last biennium of implementation of the MSSD 2016-2025. The 24th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee also discussed the preparation of the 20th Meeting of the MCSD to be held in Marseille, France, on 14-16 June 2023.

83. Under activity 4.2.1, Plan Bleu/RAC oversees work carried out by RCREE concerning a state of the art of regulations and strategies for the development of offshore wind power in Mediterranean countries. This study should take stock of the national situations and show the regional trend in terms of offshore wind development potential and the associated regulations and strategies, current and future. Plan Bleu also supervises work carried out by ECOFILAE Water Reuse concerning a state of the art of national regulations, achievements and strategies in the Mediterranean countries in terms of the use of non-conventional water (REUSE). The main action to be carried out within the framework of this is an update and updating of the Blue Plan technical notebook n°11 of 2012 (content, graphs, figures, tables and maps). Particular attention will be paid to reliability and to the definition of REUSE evaluation figures and indicators. This study should take stock of the national situations and show the regional trend in terms of the development potential of water reuse and the associated regulations and strategies, current and future.

84. Plan Bleu/RAC published guidelines for sustainable tourism, with a focus on sustainable cruise and leisure boating. Those guidelines have been used by French institutions working on the “Document Stratégique de Façade” for the French Mediterranean coast.

85. After 6 years of work, the horizontal Interreg Med project of sustainable tourism (Sustainable Tourism Community - STC) (2019-2022), bringing together more than 200 entities working on 30 sustainable tourism projects in the Mediterranean and in the continuity of the previous project entitled BlueTourMed (2016-2019), concluded its activities. During the 9th “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, in Nicosia (Cyprus, 5-7 October 2022), Plan Bleu/RAC participated in the side event entitled “Tourism and circularity for sustainable development in the Mediterranean” (see below). On 11 November 2023, the STC organized a hybrid conference “Climate action plans for tourism in the Mediterranean: a vision for the future” in the framework of COP27 to UNFCCC to discuss with European policy makers and representatives of international organizations and local authorities of the potential of the tourism sector to adapt to climate change and mitigate its negative consequences on the environment and Mediterranean communities. On 15 November 2023, Plan Bleu/RAC took part in the launch day of the Green Orizzonte Festival in Calvi to present its activities concerning sustainable tourism. On 19 December, a webinar was organized on “Cooperation success stories and best practices: future opportunities for sustainable tourism in North Macedonia”, to learn more about the main results of the STC as well as to present some good practices developed by four modular projects. Plan Bleu/RAC published the Catalogue of Best Practices on Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean and the State of Play of Tourism: A roadmap for a Greener, Inclusive and resilient tourism in the Mediterranean. The STC also published the Sustainable Tourism Community Catalogue of Outputs gathering 41 of the most tangible outputs produced by the STC, and a handbook on ‘How to use EU funding for Sustainable tourism’.

86. Plan Bleu/RAC is a partner of the consortium awarded the follow-up EuroMed project Community4Tourism (see project fiche) which will allow to further develop activities for sustainable tourism. In partnership with “Hautes Etudes Commerciales” (HEC), a major post-graduate school in France, Plan Bleu/RAC prepared a study on the benefits of digitalization in the context of the blue economy, which is going to be published in 2023.

Outcome 4.3. Innovative environmental management and economic instruments implemented for the protection and efficient use of coastal and marine resources

87. Preliminary reports on the assessment of environmentally harmful subsidies in the Mediterranean and on conservative easement tools are currently elaborated. A first draft of the latter has been shared as an InfoDoc to the Plan Bleu Focal Point meeting.

Outcome 4.4. Measures defined within the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan applied at regional level and by each Contracting Party within their jurisdiction to ensure the safety of offshore activities and reduce their potential impact on the marine environment and its ecosystem

88. REMPEC launched the work of the Intersessional Correspondence Groups (ICGs) of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (OFOG) Sub-Group on Environmental Impact in November 2022. REMPEC also recruited a consultant to support with efforts to provide programme implementation support for the practical implementation of the Offshore Protocol in February 2023 and organised the Fourth OFOG Sub-Group on Environmental Impact Meeting (Floriana, Malta, 23-24 May 2023) aimed at: i) developing regional offshore standards and guidelines on the removal (decommissioning) of installations and the related financial aspects, ii) establishing an offshore monitoring programme, and iii) proceeding with a technical review of the Annexes to the Offshore Protocol.

Programme 5: Governance

Outcome 5.1. Effective Implementation and Enforcement by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols, MAP Policies, including Ecosystem Approach related COP decisions, the MSSD and Programmes of Measures achieved at regional and national levels

89. INFO/RAC started the conceptual analysis of operational annexes to the MAP Data Policy related to different MAP data flows (BCRS, IMAP, NBB, etc.) to start the implementation at regional and, as appropriate, at national levels. A main structure model has been developed and customization is ongoing. The development of specific rules for the different data flows on the basis of the bilateral meeting with Contracting Parties is ongoing.

90. GEF 8 is open for project proposals, and the Secretariat is considering to participate in the preparation and execution of the relevant child projects related to the following Integrated Programs: (a) Food Systems Integrated Program; (b) Ecosystem Restoration Integrated Program; (c) Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution Integrated Program; and (d) Elimination of Hazardous Chemicals from Supply Chains Integrated Program.

91. The mandate of the COP 22 Programme of Work and Budget 2022-2023 (Decision IG.25/19) require the advancement the implementation of Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) in the Mediterranean and IMAP in coherence with regional and global developments. In this context an independent evaluation of the implementation of the EcAp Roadmap 2008-2021 was conducted and an analysis of recent developments at global and regional level relevant to EcAp and IMAP was undertaken. These reports underpinned the preparation of technical and policy proposals on the main elements for a renewed UNEP/MAP Ecosystem Approach policy, with the vision of enhancing and strengthening the delivery of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system’s EcAp mandate in the future. It will be presented to MAP Focal Points and COP 23 in 2023 for their consideration on giving a full mandate for elaboration of a renewed EcAp policy in the biennium 2024-2025.

92. The Secretariat, through the IMAP Task Force - composed of representatives of the CU and MAP Components - updated the terms of reference (TORs) for Correspondence Groups CORMONS, COR ESA and Online Working Groups in relation to the Ecosystem Approach governance mechanism, to align with COP22 Decision IG.25/03. The TORs clarify the flow of work between Correspondence Groups and other decision-making bodies of the MAP system as well as providing clarity on the

relationship between MAP Components and the Coordinating Unit for EcAp related products. The 9th EcAp Coordination Group considered and approved the proposal (5 July 2022). It will be presented to the MAP Focal Points and COP 23 for their consideration.

93. The Secretariat, through the IMAP Task Force and with the support of the EcAp MED III project, continues to develop the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MED QSR) towards its finalization for 10th EcAp Coordination Group meeting, MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 23. In March 2023 the MAP Components presented draft QSR assessment chapters at dedicated thematic CORMONs meetings per Cluster, and the draft socioeconomic characteristics chapter was presented to a COR ESA meeting. Post-CORMONs and COR ESA revisions to the chapters are underway to prepare a consolidated QSR document for the consideration of a meeting of Integrated CORMONs 27-28 June 2023. The EU-funded projects IMAP-MPA, EcAp MED III, and Marine Litter MED II projects continue to support beneficiary countries to implement the IMAP and to submit their national monitoring data to the Info System, supported by the MAP Components and particularly INFO/RAC.

94. The Secretariat has successfully secured three new EU-funded follow-on projects to IMAP-MPA, EcAp MED III, and Marine Litter MED II: “Bolstering Mediterranean biodiversity and MCPAs for nature” (SEMPA) €4 million euros, will commence 23 August 2023; “Supporting the Southern Mediterranean Contracting Parties in implementing ecosystem approach to achieve GES” (EcAp Med PLUS), US\$2.2 million, to commence March 2024; and Marine Litter MED PLUS: Towards a litter-free Mediterranean (ML Med PLUS), US\$1.2 million, to commence March 2024. The Project Documents and Budgets are under finalisation.

Outcome 5.2. Systemic strengthening and effective functioning and delivery of MAP decision-making and advisory bodies ensured, and efficiency enhanced with new digital approaches

95. The 19th Meeting of the Compliance Committee is currently under preparation (Athens, Greece, 4-5 July 2023). More information on issues related to the Compliance Mechanism under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols is provided in the Report on Specific Issues.

96. The MCSD Steering Committee held its 24th Meeting in Athens, Greece, on 14-15 December 2022. The meeting discussed a number of issues including the process of review and update of the MSSD 2016-2025 and the preparations for the 20th Meeting of the MCSD, to be held in Marseille, France, in June 2023.

97. The Bilateral Cooperation Agreement signed with the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security (MASE) on 2 November 2021, which was integrated into the COP 22 Decision on the MAP PoW and Budget 2022-2023 linked with specific PoW activities, as well as in the Project Document and Legal Instruments prepared for its operationalisation is under implementation. A Junior Professional Officer (JPO) came on board in the Coordinating Unit on 1 November 2022, to support the coordination of the Bilateral Agreement, funded at 50% by the MiTE funds, as well as a UN Volunteer to provide programmatic and financial assistance to the Agreement implementation. An Addendum to the MoU with MASE was signed on 17 November 2022 to support the full implementation of several activities of the UNEP/MAP PoW 2022-2023 that had non-secured or not sufficient external resources, through an additional allocation of 544,000 EUR, thus bringing the total amount allocated under the Bilateral Cooperation Agreement to 3,344,000 EUR.

98. The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France allocated, through an Agreement signed with UNEP, a voluntary contribution of 1,143,000 EUR to support a number of activities of the MAP PoW 2022-2023, in line with the axes of the PAMEx. This contribution, which is fully integrated into the MAP PoW and Budget 2022-2023 was operationalised and disbursed to the respective Regional Activity Centres through amendment of the Project Document and legal instruments with RACs, signed in November 2022. An expert was seconded by France to the Coordinating Unit to coordinate the implementation of PAMEx and ensure synergies with the UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention and work under other regional instruments and initiatives. A regional steering committee meeting of the PAMEx with the countries and organisations that have endorsed it was organised in Athens, Greece, in January 2023.

99. The Secretariat is proceeding with the preparation of an updated Resource Mobilisation Strategy (RMS) for the MTS 2022-2027. More information is provided in the Report on Specific Issues.

100. A Donor Conference for Biodiversity and Area-based Conservation in the Mediterranean was organised by SPA/RAC on 16 March 2023, in Paris (France). The conference gathered key donors and funding agencies in a roundtable and included the presentation of a four projects’ portfolio. Since the project portfolio aims at implementing the Post-2020 SAPBIO and Post-2020 Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs, an overview of their content (outcomes, outputs, targets, implementation plans, concerned countries and budget estimate) were presented to potential donors. The report of the conference as well as the report of the advisory committee meeting and the resource mobilisation strategy document are presented as information documents to the 16th Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points. Several exchanges on the Resource Mobilisation Strategy elaboration process were made with the SAPBIO National Correspondents since early 2022. The 9th Meeting of SAPBIO National Correspondents was held on 24 February 2023 in Barcelona (Spain) in order to inform the Contracting Parties on the Draft Resource Mobilization Strategy process and to consult them and have the involvement in the projects’ portfolio preparation. The report of the meeting is presented as an information document to the 16th Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points.

Outcome 5.3. Policy coherence and complementarity ensured among relevant work at global, regional and national levels and among MAP-Barcelona Convention system’s policy and regulatory instruments

101. A side event entitled “Restoration of Ecosystem in the Mediterranean: is it a key tool to limit or reverse the progress of climate change impacts?” was organized by SPA/RAC on 16 November 2022, within the Mediterranean Pavilion within its participation to the UNFCCC COP27 that took place in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt (November 2022).

102. SPA/RAC participated in the 15th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal,

Canada, 7-19 December 2022. A booth (The Mediterranean Corner) has been set up at the conference exhibition area, that aims to showcase solutions for effective biodiversity conservation from the Mediterranean, especially those linked to marine protected areas, and discuss present and future strategies and actions to support the GBF goals and targets. The Mediterranean Corner hosted 14 “Talks for Nature” of 10-15 minutes each, made by 20 speakers attending the COP or joining by videoconference. These talks presented experiences, projects and initiatives from Mediterranean organizations and stakeholders, including the Barcelona Convention.

103. The Secretariat is collaborating with the Government of Greece for a possible involvement and active role of UNEP/MAP in the preparation of the 2024 Our Ocean Conference.

Outcome 5.4. Enhanced partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagement, including with the private sector and science policy interface

104. The Secretariat continued collaboration with key partners which have MoUs with UNEP/MAP, including the Secretariat of the Union of the Mediterranean (UfMS), the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, the Black Sea Commission, ACCOBAMS, IUCN, etc. In view of enhancing collaboration with key partners the Secretariat has started its procedures for renewing the Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) that have expired. To this end, three new MoUs are under preparation, to replace the expired ones, with the following Organizations and Secretariats: MOU with the Permanent Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS); MOU with the Permanent Secretariat of the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (BSC); and, MOU with the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea & Gulf of Aden (PERSGA). Further to the above, the Secretariat is also working with the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean to update the Appendix of the MOU signed in 2012 between the two organizations. More information on this issue is provided in the Report on Specific Issues.

105. Since the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNEP/MAP and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) in 2012, both Secretariats have significantly increased their interaction, exchange of information, expert knowledge, and cooperation. A meeting will be held on 29 May 2023 at the FAO/GFCM Headquarters in Rome between the UNEP/MAP Coordinator and the new Executive Secretary of FAO/GFCM, with the presence also of the Directors of SPA/RAC and INFO/RAC, to discuss advances in relation to the implementation of the MoU, the progress regarding the FishEBM Med Project and ideas for future cooperation.

106. The Secretariat is strengthening collaboration with the European Commission; in coordination with EC Directorate General for the Environment, the Secretariat has initiated cooperation with the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fishery (DG MARE) as well as with the Directorate General for Regional and Urban policies (DG REGIO). More information is provided in the Report on Specific Issues. The UNEP/MAP Coordinator attended the high-level EIONET celebration held in Brussels, Belgium, on 22 March 2023. With this opportunity the Coordinator also met with EEA’s Executive Director, Dr Hans Bruyninckx, to discuss the Joint Work Plan implementation.

107. Collaboration with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has also been promoted. The President of the Bureau and representatives from the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention as well as the UNEP/MAP Coordinator and a representative from REMPEC attended MEPC 79, which adopted the amendments to MARPOL Annex VI concerning the Med SOx ECA, with an expected date of entry into effective application on 1 May 2025. The President of the Bureau and the UNEP/MAP Coordinator had a bilateral meeting with the IMO Secretary General, Mr Kitack Lim, in the margins of MEPC 79 to discuss issues of common interest.

108. The Secretariat participated at the Third Joint Technical Meeting - Identification of Synergies and Possible Cooperation Activities in Marine Region between representatives of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment. The meeting focused on possible cooperation activities to promote the effective application of SEA and transboundary EIA in marine regions – with a focus on activities for 2024–2026; on recommendations, proposals, further steps to be proposed to the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention (9th session) and Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on SEA (5th session) on 12 - 15 December 2023; and, on selected example(s) of good practice in the application of the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA in marine regions.

109. The First Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) (Floriana, Malta, 29 November-1 December 2022) discussed, amongst others, an analytical report produced by REMPEC on the needs and priorities of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention against regional stakeholders’ ongoing and future actions as well as projects and available resources, identifying gaps and duplications. The report compiled input from 14 main stakeholders (UfM, OSRL, FEDERCHIMICA, IOI, Cedre, PAM, CLIA, IPIECA, Med Cruise, EMSA, West Med initiative, OceanCare, Sea Alarm and ITOFF) and from the draft National Action Plans (NAPs) for the implementation of the said strategy from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Montenegro, Tunisia, and Türkiye. With the support of REMPEC, NAPs were fully completed for Albania, Montenegro, Tunisia, and Türkiye, second draft NAPs were completed for Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Israel, and a first draft NAP was completed for Morocco, whilst the designation of the national consultant in relation to the NAP for Egypt is pending confirmation.

110. MedECC made progress on evaluating options for its institutionalization and clarifying its terms of reference; the UNEP/MAP Secretariat together with Plan Bleu/RAC are participating actively in this process.

111. As provided for in the Regional Action Plan for the conservation of threatened species and marine key habitats, SPA/RAC has prepared the criteria and procedure for admission as a Regional Action Plan Partner in line with the decision IG.19/61 “MAP/Civil Society cooperation and partnership”. The conditions and criteria for the award of the title of Regional Action Plan Partner are submitted as working document to the consideration of the 16th SPA/BD Focal Points’ meeting in view

to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 23 for adoption.

Outcome 5.5. Coordinated approaches implemented to strengthen public institution capacities for the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols

112. PAP/RAC continues to support the Syrian Virtual University (SVU). This cooperation between the PAP/RAC and the SUV was agreed and defined by an MoU and is related to the Master's Programme of Qualification and Specialization in Integrated Management of Natural Resources. Like in the previous year, in 2023 the PAP/RAC team has been contributing with lectures to the third semester focused on Integrated Management of Natural Resources. Topics of relevance for the students were selected: ICZM Protocol and implementation of the ICZM process; MSP and land-sea interactions; addressing climate change challenges by ICZM/MSP and best adaptation practices in coastal zones; Coast and hydrology cluster of IMAP. The assignments for the students were prepared by the PAP/RAC team using the MedOpen experience.

113. The MSP Workspace launched by PAP/RAC in June 2022 was used for the seminar on MSP within the GEF MedProgramme that started online on 15 November 2022. The event brought together around 60 participants, who heard about the training program spanning over more than two months. The goal of the seminar was to support the establishment of a common basis for the implementation of MSP within the Barcelona Convention system by providing the opportunity to share practices and lessons learnt from the MSP application across the Mediterranean region. It ended with an online session on 22-23 February 2023, when the four big topics addressed in the MSP Workspace were discussed in detail.

114. Based on the high priority actions included in the Post-2020 SAPBIO, four project concept were elaborated in close collaboration with the relevant regional organisations and partners and in close consultations with the SAPIO National Correspondents. Coherent projects to be implemented at the Mediterranean regional, sub-regional or multinational levels are being identified, conceptualised and drafted. They will be developed through a Fundraising Strategy for the Post-2020 SAPBIO including Post-2020 Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs for the period 2022-2030 and beyond, supported by a donors' conference in Spring 2023.

115. The Coordinating Unit is collaborating with the MEPIELAN Centre, which is a part of EPLO, for the preparation of a short ½ weeks course on the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. An SSFA is under development in this respect.

Programme 6: Towards Monitoring, Assessment, Knowledge and Vision of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast for Informed Decision-Making

Outcome 6.1. Inclusive and participatory foresight activities conducted at regional and national and local levels, with associated capacity-building

116. In coordination with, and support of the GEF-funded Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme/Child Project CP1.1), MED POL prepared a pre-publication update of the 2005 Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) for the Mediterranean Sea and Coast. The assessment and reporting of the TDA was performed based on the global GEF TDA/SAP methodology (October 2020 Guidelines). To this aim, the 2023 TDA is aimed to update and strengthen the knowledge and connections between several environmental issues such as impact of climate change on natural and socio-economic systems, impact of emerging pollution on marine ecosystems, and potential for sustainable blue economy (to mention a few) and their causes. The progress on the preparation of the TDA report was presented to the Second Project Steering Committee (SC) Meeting of the MedProgramme, Child Project 1.1 (Sarajevo, 14-15 March 2023). The Steering Committee agreed to convene an additional TDA-SC Meeting in 4th Quarter of 2023 for the initial endorsement of the report prior to submission to the next Child Project 1.1 SC Meeting planned for the 1st Quarter of 2024 for approval. The pre-publication version of the TDA report is shared as information document with the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points to be held in Athens on 24-26 May 2023.

117. Work on the Med2050 foresight initiative is proceeding smoothly. Specific activities recently implemented include: interviews of 57 key personalities from all Mediterranean countries; a webinar for the youth involving 44 of them, organized on 2 March 2022; a workshop for the youth in partnership with the Mediterranean Youth Commission (Marseille, France, 5-6 December 2022); a presentation during Forum Mondial de la Mer (Bizerte, Tunisia, 23 September 2022); and a workshop for the youth from East and South-East Mediterranean, in partnership with Anna Lindh Foundation and funded by French Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Mediterranean Direction (Alexandria, 22 February 2023). To trigger debates during these two last events, foresight fictions under the format of Pecha Kucha have been prepared. The Med2050 progress overview has been provided as an Information Document to the 20th MCSD meeting and to the Plan Bleu Focal Points meeting.

Outcome 6.2. Science-based IMAP, foresight and other assessments and assessment tools for strengthened science-policy interface and decision making

118. In line with the Decision IG.23/6 of COP 20 related to the 2017 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR), and Decision IG.24/4 of COP21 providing the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap implementation (Naples, Italy, December 2019), and further to the Programme of Work and Budget for the 2022–2023 biennium, MED POL implemented activities to deliver the outputs defined within seven processes and milestones of the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap. This resulted in significant achievements related to i) setting the new and upgraded assessment criteria, ii) defining IMAP spatial assessment units (SAUs) from the areas of monitoring by applying IMAP nested approach; and iii) the preparation and implementation of IMAP Pollution assessment methodologies.

119. The 2nd CorMon Meetings on Pollution and Marine Litter were held on 1-2 and 3 March 2023, respectively, in Athens, Greece. The Meetings approved the following assessment criteria: (a) The new Background Concentrations (BC) and Background Assessment Concentrations (BAC) for IMAP Common Indicator 17; (b) the new Environmental Assessment Criteria (EAC) for IMAP Common Indicator 20; (c) Further alignment of the list of EAC values for IMAP Common Indicator 17 with the sources originally used; (d) the Mediterranean EAC values for CI 20; (e) the new and updated reference conditions and boundary values of Chla, TP and DIN for the Adriatic Sea Sub-region coastal and open (offshore) waters; (f) the possible

approaches for future upgrade of EAC for IMAP Common Indicators 17 and 18; and (g) the updated Baseline Values (BV) and Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP Common Indicator 23 (i.e., seafloor macro-litter and floating microplastics). These assessment criteria regarding contaminants, nutrients and marine litter will be submitted for endorsement of the MED POL Focal Points with a view to their integration into Decision on the 2023 MED QSR foreseen for submission to the upcoming COP23.

120. Within the framework of the EU-funded projects IMAP-MPA and EcAp-Med III, UNEP/MAP and SPA/RAC are supporting Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia to elaborate an integrated monitoring plan for biodiversity and pollution implemented in pilot monitoring sites (MPAs and in high pressure areas). Memoranda of Agreement (MoAs) were signed with the national institutions designated by the Contracting Parties for IMAP implementation. Field work and data collection was finalized in Israel and Morocco and is ongoing in Egypt, Lebanon, Libya and Tunisia. Data submission of new and historical data into the IMAP info system is ongoing. These activities will be finalized by all the beneficiary countries by the end of June 2023 for the IMAP-MPA project and by the end of November 2023 for the EcAp-MED III.

121. SPA/RAC is supporting Montenegro to implement their national IMAP for biodiversity and NIS. MoA was signed with the Institute of marine biology in Montenegro which is the national institution identified by the Contracting Party. A complete monitoring plan for the field surveys of the selected CI in the selected monitoring sites in line with the national monitoring programme was prepared and agreed with the Institute. The upload of data collected in the framework of previous projects and initiatives into the IMAP Info System is ongoing. The fieldwork has already started. This activity will be finalized by December 2023.

122. SPA/RAC is assisting Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement their national IMAP for biodiversity. Official contacts have been made to identify the national institutional partners for the implementation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the monitoring of sea birds will be implemented, while in Foça SEPA in Türkiye, the monitoring of *Posidonia oceanica* meadows will be conducted. These activities will be finalized by December 2023.

123. Meetings of the IMAP Task Force continue to be held regularly, addressing key issues of implementation of the EcAp Roadmap, the organization of CORMONs and implementation of the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap. A draft of the 2023 MED QSR has been further developed, based on the outline and annotated contents agreed by the 8th EcAp Coordination Group meeting (9 September 2021), which will be presented to the Integrated CORMONs meeting 27-28 June 2023. INFO/RAC is collecting the data for cartographic representation of 2023 MED QSR. Plan Bleu/RAC prepared the socioeconomic characteristics chapter of 2023 MED QSR.

124. In coordination with the EU-funded EcAp MED III Project (2020-2023) and the IMAP-MPA Project (2019-2023), MED POL provided support to implementing SSFAs with seven project participating countries (Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco). Support included substantive content of the SSFAs and ToRs-activities and outputs; coaching and guidelines regarding implementation of substantive activities within the monitoring and assessment efforts for IMAP Pollution Cluster at national level; providing training modalities for national counterparts and contributing to training workshops, as required. MED POL is also providing direct support to strengthening implementation of national monitoring programmes on pollution and marine litter to Montenegro with the support of the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (using MTF funds), which is planned in the 2nd half of 2023. Specifically, support is provided in relation to IMAP Common Indicators 13&14, 17, 18, 22 and 23 which contributes to the assessment of the marine environment of the Adriatic Sea Sub-region.

125. MED POL also contributed to the ongoing IMAP-based monitoring programmes for marine litter in the Mediterranean. MED POL followed up with 15 countries for uploading datasets for beach macro-litter (M1), seafloor macro-litter (M2) and floating microplastics (M3) extended over the period 2016-2022, which have been used for development of the 2023 MED QSR, as well as for updating the Baseline Values (BV) and establishing Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP Common Indicator 23 (seafloor macro-litter and floating microplastics).

126. MED POL undertook the preparation of the Proposal of the 2023 MED QSR Pollution and Marine Litter Chapters. Further to the new and/or updated assessment criteria for Common Indicators 13, 17 and 20, as well as the assessment methodologies set for IMAP Common Indicators 13&14; 17, 18, 20 and 21, MED POL integrated and aggregated the assessment findings generated per sub-division by using available datasets into the assessment findings for four Mediterranean sub-regions. However, due to insufficient data quality reporting, it was not possible to ensure optimal application of the integration and aggregation rules. To address this issue, compatible methodologies for GES assessment were used for EO5 and EO9, as well as for EO10 to a certain extent. This solution is expected to facilitate optimal integration of the Ecological Objectives in the future QSRs. The MED POL Pollution and Marine Litter Cluster Chapters of the 2023 MED QSR were reviewed by the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Pollution Monitoring (1-2 March 2023) and the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Marine Litter (3 March 2023). Further to approval of the assessment findings, along with the proposals provided for their finalization, work is ongoing with the aim to prepare revised assessments for the consideration of the Meeting of Integrated CorMons which will be held on 27-28 June 2023.

127. Plan Bleu/RAC has started work in the framework of the EU-funded MSFD support-project ABIOMMED to elaborate methodological guidance on ex-post socio-economic analysis of measures aiming at achieving GES in the Mediterranean. In this framework, a socio-economic analysis of one regional biodiversity measure will be conducted. Results are expected by Summer 2023.

128. A desk review of available data sources, best practices and methodologies in the Mediterranean for the monitoring and assessment of seafloor damage was elaborated in the framework of the EcAp-Med III project. This study was used for the elaboration of the proposal on the Ecological Objective 6 on sea floor integrity. The first draft of the EO6 proposal was delivered in September 2022 and was reviewed and discussed with the experts of the biodiversity Online Working Group on

benthic habitats. The updated version was discussed during the CORMON meeting on biodiversity and fisheries (Athens, Greece, 9-10 March 2023). This work is being developed with the support of the ABIOMMED project and the MASE funds.

129. The CORMON meeting on biodiversity and fisheries took place in Athens, Greece, on 9-10 March 2023. As a contribution to the 2023 MED QSR biodiversity (EO1) and non-indigenous species (EO2) chapters, six thematic assessment reports for benthic habitats, cetaceans, Mediterranean monk seal, seabirds, marine turtles and non-indigenous species were developed and discussed by the CORMON meeting on biodiversity and fisheries. These chapters are being updated following the comments received from the Contracting Parties. The updated versions will be submitted to the forthcoming integrated CORMON meeting to be organized in Athens, Greece on 27 and 28 June 2023. Work on the development of the Ecological Objective 4 on marine food webs is also proceeding. The assessment chapter for EO3 on fisheries is being developed by GFCM Secretariat. If available in time, the draft chapter will be circulated by email to the CORMON representatives, for review before its submission to the integrated CORMON meeting in June 2023.

130. With the support of the MedProgramme, MED POL in its role as the executing agency for Child project 1.1 is developing an offshore monitoring strategy based on the assessment of comparative experiences with offshore monitoring in the Mediterranean with the aim to improve environmental data collection processes in GEF eligible Mediterranean Countries. Countries will be assisted to upgrade their national monitoring programmes in line with IMAP requirements to also cover the offshore areas beyond coastal or territorial waters and address topics not sufficiently covered under the existing monitoring (primarily for pollution and litter). Support will be provided also to put in place IMAP for selected indicators in up to 5 pilots offshore areas.

131. With the financial support of GEF MedProgramme, the methodology for IMAP candidate indicator 25 on Land Cover Land Use (LCLU) was updated and the updated Indicator Guidance factsheet prepared. Contributions for the 2023 MED QSR have been collected, namely for the Adriatic sub-region with the assistance of the SIDA project (for all 3 CIs) and with the report on lessons learned for CIs 15 and 16 under EcAp MED III project.

132. The CORMON Coast and Hydrography meeting was held on 28-29 March 2023, in Marseilles, France, bringing together representatives of 13 CPs. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the content of the 2023 MED QSR chapters on EOs 7 and 8; solutions to strengthen the Science Policy Interface (SPI) for the implementation of IMAP - with a focus on CI 15 on hydrography; the upgraded Guiding Factsheet for the Candidate Common Indicator 25 "Land cover change"; and the definition of GES for the Common Indicator 16 "Length of coastline subject to physical disturbance due to the influence of human-made structures". On 30th March, also in Marseille, Plan Bleu/RAC hosted the CORESA meeting.

133. The MSSD Dashboard has been updated for its 2023 version under the WESR Platform and presented as an on-line dashboard to the MSSD

Outcome 6.3. IMAP implementation and Environment and Development Observation provide updated and quality assured data in support of decision-making by Contracting Parties and assessment of GES.

134. Upon signature of a renegotiated UN to UN Agreement with IAEA/MESL, the Proficiency Tests (PTs) related to the determination of trace metals and organic contaminants in sediment and biota matrixes have been launched, along with the preparation of related Training Courses which took place in November 2023. The ongoing activities will result in the preparation of the programmes for nutrients and contaminants in commonly consumed seafood, whereby the programme for biomarkers is expected to be provided during the coming biennium. Ongoing activities also continue to address the specific knowledge gaps of the IMAP competent laboratories, along with the technical missions to the IMAP competent laboratories with the greatest need.

135. REMPEC prepared the best practice review of Descriptor 8 (D08C04, 2018 Reporting) of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the revised draft Data Standard and Data Dictionaries for IMAP Common Indicator (CI) 19, the methodology for GES assessment related to IMAP CI 19, in November 2022, and submitted these to the Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Kappara, Malta, 13-15 June 2023) for information. REMPEC also prepared the initial assessment findings related to IMAP CI 19 to contribute to the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR in January 2023, which was submitted to the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Pollution Monitoring (CORMON) (Athens, Greece, 1-2 March 2023) and the Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Kappara, Malta, 13-15 June 2023) for consideration, in preparation for the Integrated CORMONs Meeting (Athens, Greece, 27-28 June 2023).

136. Under ML MED II project, MED POL developed guidelines for monitoring microplastics deriving from wastewater treatment plants and riverine inputs of marine litter. In support of the development process, the Online Working Group on Marine Litter (OWG-ML) was activated with membership of more than 20 experts from Turkey, Spain, Italy, Croatia, Israel, Tunisia, France, Slovenia, Morocco and EC/JRC. The Guidelines extract from the most applied methodologies for monitoring riverine inputs of marine litter. At this stage, the focus is on monitoring macro- and micro-litter through the application of visual observations, surveys on the riverbanks and dams; and the use of manta nets, water pumps and floats. MED POL submitted the Guidelines to the CorMon Marine Litter Meeting (Athens, Greece, 3 March 2023) which recommended preparation of an updated version to be presented to the upcoming Integrated CorMon Meeting (Athens, Greece, 27-28 June 2023). MED POL is also in the process of preparing Guidelines for monitoring microplastics from wastewater treatment plants. Work is expected to be completed in the 3rd Quarter of 2023.

137. Within the framework of the ILIAD Digital Twin of the Ocean project (consortium of 56 partners, Horizon Europe project), SPA/RAC achieved the mapping of key relevant policies and institutions in the EU and non-EU, nationally, regionally and internationally in the Mediterranean and other European seas. In addition, SPA/RAC assessed the capacity building needs of the ILIAD pilots and started developing a capacity building programme. In addition, a series of webinar related to ILIAD topics have started since January 2023. Moreover, exchanges with REMPEC started in order to evaluate further involvement in some ILIAD activities related to NIS and Ballast water.

138. INFO/RAC has started the annual upgrade and vulnerability analysis of InfoMAP and the Barcelona Convention Reporting System (BCRS) and its functionalities in view of evaluating needs for further improvement. The terms of reference for the MAP Data Management Task Force have been developed and the kick-off meeting held. The integration of available databases and integrated data coming from the other MAP Components has started in line with the work carried out by the Data Management Task Force. The maintenance and repower of the InfoMAP platform have been ensured as well as the integration of their modules. Data management tasks for CAMP BiH and CAMP Transboundary Otranto have been carried out toward a full integration with infoMAP System.

139. The completion of the IMAP Info System with the related implementation of data flows is ongoing in line with the finalization and final approval by Contracting Parties of the Data Standards for all the remaining CIs (EO3 not included). New Data Standards and Data Dictionaries for an additional 7 Common Indicators are being integrated into the IMAP Info system, extending the reporting to a total of 18 CIs. DSs and DDs under finalization are related to the following IMAP Common Indicators: 3, 4, 5, 18, 19, 20 and candidate 24. The available final versions have been implemented as correspondent data flows in the IMAP Info System to enable the reporting of the new data and support the elaboration of the draft 2023 MED QSR by Q4 2022. In the second semester 2022 Draft DDs & DDs for IMAP CIs 3, 4 and 5 have been final tuned in order to submit the final version to the CORMON Meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries held in March 2023. At the same time the implementation of the correspondent data flows have been made and the testing phase is in course. Draft DSs & DDs for IMAP Common Indicators 18 & 20 (biomarkers and contaminants in seafood) developed by INFO/RAC and reviewed by the Online-Working Group (OWG) on Pollution, approved during the CORMON Pollution (27-30 May 2022) have been finalized with the inputs received by the Contracting Parties and the implementation of the relative data flows have been carried out and currently are in testing phase.

140. Within the EcAp Med III project, all national reports were completed for CI 15 and CI 16, and data collected will be included in the draft of the 2023 MED QSR (EO 7) as appropriate. The report on lessons learned was also prepared that will be used for the preparation of the 2023 QSR and presented at the related CORMON meeting in 2023. Data scheme of the SDF web Application elaborated and the annexes of the SDF updated with the new Updated Reference List of Marine Habitat Types for the Selection of Sites to be Included in the National Inventories of Natural Sites of Conservation Interest in the Mediterranean and Annex II: List of endangered and threatened species. The functional prototype to be tested with the SDF already compiled will be undertaken during the last trimester of 2023.

141. MAMIAS web application is planned to be deployed on the SPA/RAC production server during summer 2023 in order to be tested with selected user before its official release and use during planned national training on data collection on NIS within the new GEF FISHEBM Med project.

142. The current MAPAMED data is online on the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform. GIS Data was updated with its quality checked for data collected in several projects implemented by SP/RAC so as to be available on MBP by mid-2023: (a) on marine Turtles in Tunisia, Libya, Lebanon, Egypt, Italy, and France; (b) on marine spatial planning in Albania; (c) on Specially Protected Areas in the Mediterranean. Partnership will be established with data providers, to cover some data gaps, like EMODNET, COPENICUS. Furthermore, the terms of reference for the preparation of a SPA/RAC Data Management policy with the main data management policy of the UNEP MAP is being prepared.

Programme 7: For informed and consistent advocacy, awareness, education and communication

Outcome 7.1. Stakeholders and policy makers properly informed about the state of the Mediterranean Sea and coast and aware of the environmental priority issues

143. The Parliamentarian's Guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast has been approved by the UNEP Publications Committee for publication during the biennium. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), a MAP Partner, is providing substantive input and undertaking a survey aimed at members of its regional network. The Guide will serve as a handbook for parliamentarians around the Mediterranean, harnessing their role for a greater implementation of, and compliance with, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols through adequate national laws and by holding governmental actors to account. This publication will be launched in December 2023 on the sidelines of COP 23.

144. The Secretariat launched the first call for applications for the fourth edition of the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award in November 2022. The survey for the application has been developed and easy access with a clear vademecum has been provided. The video developed by INFO/RAC facilitates IEFCA dissemination and gives the main information to candidates. The deadline for application was recently extended to 30 June and a collaboration with MedCities, a MAP Partner, initiated with a view to promoting the Award to eligible cities around the Mediterranean. A dedicated online workshop has been organized in 18 May 2023, to provide interested municipalities with the necessary information and support for the preparation of their applications, while a dedicated helpdesk has been also created under INFO/RAC.

145. The second edition of SPAMI Day Celebration, a day to celebrate the Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance and expand ocean conservation efforts, taking place on 15 April 2023, was celebrated through various events and activities at the SPAMI level. The theme for this year's celebration is 'Co-management and Civil Society Participation', and it involves the participation of SPAMI management stakeholders and civil society organizations.

146. Preparatory activities for the Mediterranean Coast Day 2023 celebration have started. As envisaged by GEF MedProgramme, this year's celebration should take place in Albania and should focus on coastal aquifers. Therefore, PAP/RAC has agreed with Plan Bleu and IHP-UNESCO to propose a combined event in Vlora i.e. to organise an international technical workshop on this theme to be followed by a high-level panel and a series of awareness raising activities. PAP/RAC has drafted a letter to be sent by MAP Coordinator to the Albanian Minister to obtain agreement and ensure support to this initiative.

147. During this period the Secretariat worked closely with Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) to enhance collaboration and outreach. To this end, UNEP/MAP took part in the Mediterranean Pavilion at UNFCCC COP 27 (6-18 November 2022, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt); the MedPavilion is the first of its kind to be set up at a UN Climate Change Conference. It is an initiative led by UfM together with UNEP/MAP and the PRIMA Foundation, along with a coalition of institutions dealing with climate action in the region. The Secretariat issued a media advisory (dated 13 September 2022) presenting the rationale and the purpose of the participation in the Mediterranean Pavilion in COP 27 of UNFCCC: <https://bit.ly/MedPavilion>. More information on the collaboration with UfMS is presented in the Report on Specific Issues.

148. A joint effort at the MAP system level is on-going regarding gender mainstreaming and for potential better inclusion of gender aspects in the PoW 2024-2025. Gender focal points were identified by the RACs and together with the Coordinating Unit, a MAP Gender Strategy is under finalisation, in order to support and coordinate efforts made at the MAP level to reach the objectives of the SDG 5.

149. Eight web stories were crafted and published in the news section of the UNEP/MAP website during the period under review. Themes addressed include gender-sensitive assessments of climate resilience, PAMEx objectives, the MedProgramme intervention to address mercury pollution in Bosnia and Herzegovina and biodiversity protection in the wake of the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. A press release announcing the formal adoption of Med SOx ECA by IMO entitled "The Mediterranean reaches a historic milestone in the regional endeavour for greener shipping" was issued (in English and French) on 16 December 2022.

150. Within the framework of a Small-Scale Funding Agreement (SSFA) initiated by the Coordinating Unit's communication team, Association Africa 21, a network of African journalists, has developed three briefing notes (in Arabic and French) for journalists operating in North Africa and organized a webinar that addressed the need for environmental journalists to acquaint themselves with the mandate of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system. The webinar, which saw the participation of media professionals, scholars and journalism students, also saw a discussion on options for the mainstreaming of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols into journalism curricula in Maghreb countries. Additional information, the briefing notes and the webinar recording are available on Africa 21 website. All the deliverables were produced by Africa 21 experts for journalists with the Coordinating Unit providing backstopping and background material. The products are fully owned by the media network and will serve as resources for future reporting on the Barcelona Convention's implementation in North African countries.

Outcome 7.2. Citizen and general public awareness and outreach raised through citizen science and digital campaigns

151. Plan Bleu/RAC continued its series of webinars in the frame of its launched a new communication initiative "Les Rendez-vous du Plan Bleu". During the third edition, on 27 October 2022, experts and specialists from Plan Bleu, but also from its partners MedECC and the Platform Océan Climat explained coastal risks linked to climate change in the Mediterranean basin to an audience of 68 listeners. The fourth edition of the Blue Plan/RAC Meetings took place on 6 April 2023 in front of an audience of 70 persons and focused on the following theme: the concrete environmental protection obligations resulting from the Barcelona Convention. The fifth edition of the Rendez-vous du Plan Bleu took place on 31 May 2023 on the following theme: The Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development, what challenges in 2023?"

152. For the 2023 edition of SPAMI Day, SPA/RAC issued a call for project proposals aimed to Mediterranean CSOs. The call aimed to solicit ideas for activities to celebrate the SPAMI Day and promote marine biodiversity conservation. Six projects were selected for funding to be implemented in collaboration with SPAMI managers in Albania, Algeria, Italy, Lebanon, Slovenia and Tunisia between 15 April and 15 June 2023.

153. The documentary films "Salt in the Eyes" and "My name is blue" produced within MAVA projects, respectively on bycatch and marine turtles conservation, were made available on WaterBear, whose content has an exclusively ecological stance and a worldwide audience.

154. A documentary film titled "Sentinels of the Mediterranean", was produced as part of the "Together for the Med" initiative set up by MAVA. The documentary is currently being presented at international environmental film festivals and was featured in Oceanographic magazine.

155. Until December 2022, film screenings and debates on environmental issues were organized in Tunisia as part of the EnviroFest Environmental Film Festival, attracting around 4,000 spectators annually. The activity was supported by MAVA-funded projects MedKeyHabitats II, MedBycatch, Turtles, and the EU-funded IMAP-MPA project.

156. Within The MAVA funded MedBycatch project, the fisherman Mr. Fahmi Ben Mustapha, who collaborated with SPA/RAC, Association "Les Amis des Oiseaux" (AAO), and WWF Tunisia collected data on bycatch in Tunisia, resolved to continue the work to reduce bycatch after the project's end. In March 2023, he removed all shark-targeted fishing gears from his boat and turned it into a space to share his experience and the techniques he had tested as part of the MedBycatch project. He has installed two 7-meter-long sails depicting vulnerable species and displaying the slogan "We have chosen to protect."

Outcome 7.3. Towards a digital transformation: use of digital technologies to improve networking and MAP visibility

157. Information on the SPAMI collaborative platform are yearly updated with the support of SPAMI managers. The webpage on SPAMI Day, created in April 2022 has also been updated for the new edition of SPAMI Day: <https://spami.medchm.net/en/spami-day-->