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Fifth Project Steering Committee Meeting of MedProgramme Child Project 1.1

Madrid, 15 October 2024

Agenda item 4: Review of the status of implementation of the Chemical Waste Component of Child Project 1.1
Agenda item 5: Review of the status of implementation of the International Waters Component of Child Project 1.1

Updated Progress Report 2024-2025

UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2024

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List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

ASM	Annual Stocktaking Meeting
CETI	Center for ecotoxicological researches of Montenegro
CIEMAT	Centre for Energy, Environmental and Technological Research
CP	Child Project
EMP	Environment Management Plan
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HBCD	Hexabromocyclododecane
Hg	Mercury
HSE	Health-Safety-Environment
IMAP	Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme
IT	Information Technology
IW	International Waters
KM	Knowledge Management
KMS	Knowledge Management System
MAP	Mediterranean Action Plan
MapX	Online platform for managing and visualizing geospatial data on natural resources
MedPCU	MedProgramme Project Coordination Unit
MED POL	The Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution in the Mediterranean
MedProgramme	Mediterranean Sea Programme
MedWaves	The UNEP/MAP Regional Activity Centre for SCP
MTR	Mid-Term Review
PCB	Polychlorinated biphenyls
PFOS	Perfluorooctane Sulfonate
PIR	Project Implementation Report
Plan Bleu	Regional Activity Centre of the Mediterranean Action Plan
POP	Persistent Organic Pollutants
QSR	Quality Status Report
SCCP	Short Chain Chlorinated Paraffins
SCM	Steering Committee Meeting
SCP/RAC	Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSFA	Small-Scale Financing Agreement
TDA	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report covers work progress in the performance of activities carried out in the period of March 2024 to September 2024 by the MedProgramme Child Project 1.1 (GEF ID 9684) "Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in the Mediterranean Hotspots and Measuring Progress to Impacts." Child Project 1.1 is implemented in the framework of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded "Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): "Enhancing Environmental Security" (GEF ID 9607).

2. This report presents also the contextual framework of past activities in view of those completed in this period, highlighting also the results and progress achieved for the three components of Child Project 1.1.

3. The participating countries in Child Project 1.1 are Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco and Tunisia.

4. Child Project 1.1 financing by GEF is USD 14.250 million. Co-financing by participating countries and executing agencies is USD 53,146,727 million.

II. KEY HIGHLIGHTS

5. The main deliverables for this period March 2024 to September 2024 show an overall good achievement vis-à-vis planned targets. Key highlights include:

a) Good progress on disposal of PCB in Algeria as Phase 1 is nearing completion by end of 2024. Extension of contract for addressing phase 2 PCB quantities is in progress.
b) Good progress on disposal of PCB in Lebanon as all materials and regulatory requirements are in place awaiting improvement of the security situation in order to initiate packaging of PCB, transport and disposal.
c) Good progress on the engagement of UNOPS for managing Phase 2 contracts for PCB and mercury disposal in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Tunisia.
d) Work related to prevention of new POPs is facing challenges and difficulties. The SCM is requested to review/approve the way forward proposed under Outputs 1.3 and 1.4.
e) Good progress on completing the offshore strategy and identification of pilot monitoring stations for 5 countries.
f) The mid-term review (MTR) of CP1.1 from 2020 to 2024 on project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency) indicated satisfactory rating for strategic relevance; moderately satisfactory on effectiveness; and moderately satisfactory on efficiency. The executive summary of the MTR is presented in the Annex to this report.

III. PROJECT OBJECTIVE & OUTCOMES

6. The objective of Child Project 1.1 is to achieve measurable reductions in levels of POPs and mercury in priority Mediterranean coastal hot spots and catchment areas. CP1.1 consists of three components:

a) Component 1 addresses the GEF focal area of Chemicals and Waste. The key outcome of this component is the reduction of wastes and hazardous chemicals (POPs and mercury) in coastal hotspots and catchment areas. It is implemented by the UNEP/MAP-MED POL (leading executing Agency) and MedWaves (SCP/RAC).
b) Component 2 addresses the GEF Focal area of International Waters. The principal outcome of this component stipulates that littoral countries are enabled to identify trends and progress to impacts achieved in the implementation of the MedProgramme. It is implemented by MED POL and Plan Blue.
c) Component 3 concerns monitoring and evaluation as well as information dissemination with a key outcome that project results and knowledge are effectively disseminated and

used to adaptively manage the project. It is implemented by the MedProgramme Coordinating Unit (MedPCU) in UNEP/MAP.

IV. DELIVERY OF OUTPUTS & PROGRESS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Component 1: Chemicals and Waste

7. The range of activities under Component 1 focuses on the reduction of hazardous chemicals pollution, namely Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) banned under the Stockholm Convention, and mercury banned under the Minamata Convention. It covers national activities in eight countries, as well as regional activities to share lessons learned. The Child Project aims to remove 2,000 tons of POPs and 50 tons of mercury wastes from the coastal zones of the project countries. This is achieved through a two-phased activity for the identification, safe storage and disposal of PCBs and POPs; an activity dedicated to the disposal of mercury; as well as pilot projects aimed at the prevention of the generation of wastes containing new POPs and mercury.

8. Component 1 consists of 4 outputs:
   a) Output 1.1: Management and disposal of 2,000 tons of POPs.
   b) Output 1.2: Management and safe storage of 50 tons of mercury wastes.
   c) Output 1.3: New POPs reduction and alternatives pilot activities completed.
   d) Output 1.4: Mercury reduction through pilot activities on mercury alternatives.

9. Work progress for each of the above outputs is explained below.

Output 1.1: Management and disposal of 2,000 tons of POPs

10. This output deals with the removal of 2000 tons of POPs. This is achieved through the sound disposal of PCB oils, PCB contaminated oils and PCB equipment with the targeted quantities tabulated below. Planned removal work in MedProgramme Partner Countries is as follows:

Country	PCB quantity (tons)
Lebanon	271
Algeria (Phase 1)	418
Algeria (Phase 2)	613
Tunisia Kasserine site	35.5
Tunisia equipment	326
Albania	240
Bosnia and Herzegovina	19
Montenegro	77
Total	**2000**

Lebanon

11. Veolia ES Field Services Ltd was awarded by UNON a procurement contract for the drainage, labelling, packaging, transportation, shipment and sound disposal of PCB oils, PCB contaminated oils and PCB equipment in Lebanon. The contract was signed on 25 April 2023 and extended till 5 December 2024. A one-year extension of this contract is under preparation by UNON till 31 December 2025.

12. In total, 271 tons of contaminated oil, soil and electrical transformers contaminated with PCB will be disposed. These consist of 241 transformers to be drained/ packed to be exported and shipped to be treated outside of Lebanon; 151 transformers located at Baouchrieh Site; 6 transformers at Qartaba Depot; 2 transformers at Zahrani Depot; 2 transformers at Litani Depot; 80 transformers and 2 PCB contaminated oil barrels located at Hraiche Facility (Kadisha Electricity). A location map of the above sites is shown.

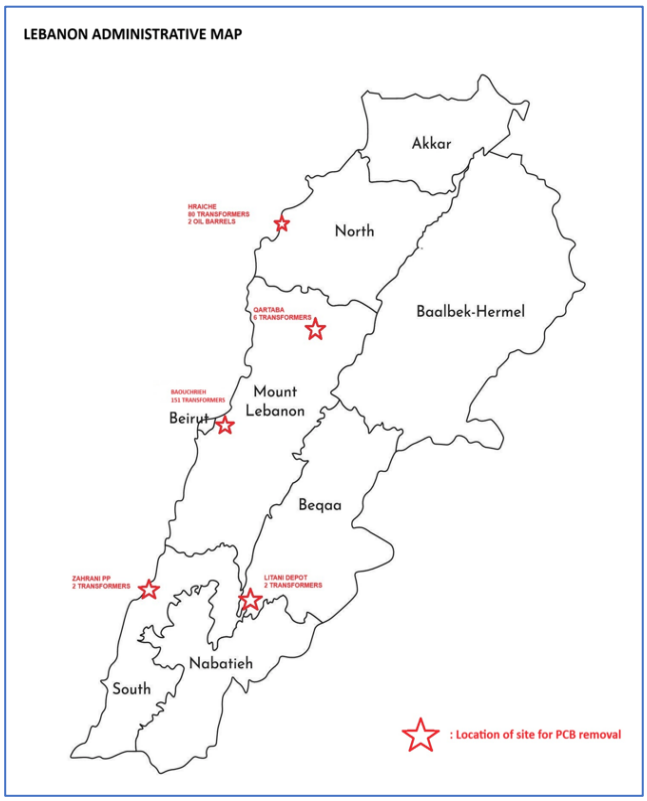
13. Work progress in Lebanon has been hampered by security issues and regional conflicts. Travel ban into Lebanon is still in effect for all Veolia ES Field Services Ltd (VFS) staff.

14. To date, the following progress has been achieved:

a) Basel notification: Dossier have been submitted to the Notifier Toxivia for signature. Third Party Liability of the Exporter Toxivia has been requested by the Ministry of Environment. The dossiers are signed by waste generators and the file was submitted to the Ministry of Environment for its assessment and approval.

b) Health, Safety and Environmental Management (HSE) Plan: HSE plan was submitted and approved by the Ministry of Environment.

c) Project equipment was exported from the UK and arrived to Port of Beirut on 19th of July 2024. Equipment include drums and other safety materials. The equipment was moved out of the Port of Beirut and placed in an interim storage facility.



15. Veolia indicated that removal of 271 tons of PCB can proceed immediately after the security situation in Lebanon improves. Alternatively, Veolia is proposing to remote-manage certain aspects of the operational works in Lebanon. This would involve PCB inventory verification, draining PCB transformer oils into new UN approved drums and collection and transfer to a central location for from the smaller sites in Lebanon.

16. It is expected that once operational works are started, PCB removal in Lebanon can be completed in about 6 months.

Algeria

17. Tredi SAS was awarded by UNON a Phase 1 procurement contract for the drainage, labelling, packaging, transportation, shipment and sound disposal of PCB oils, PCB contaminated oils and PCB equipment in Algeria. The contract was signed on 30 June 2023 and is currently being amended to include additional quantities of PCBs. The amended contract will be extended to 31 March 2026, coinciding with the operational end date of CP1.1.

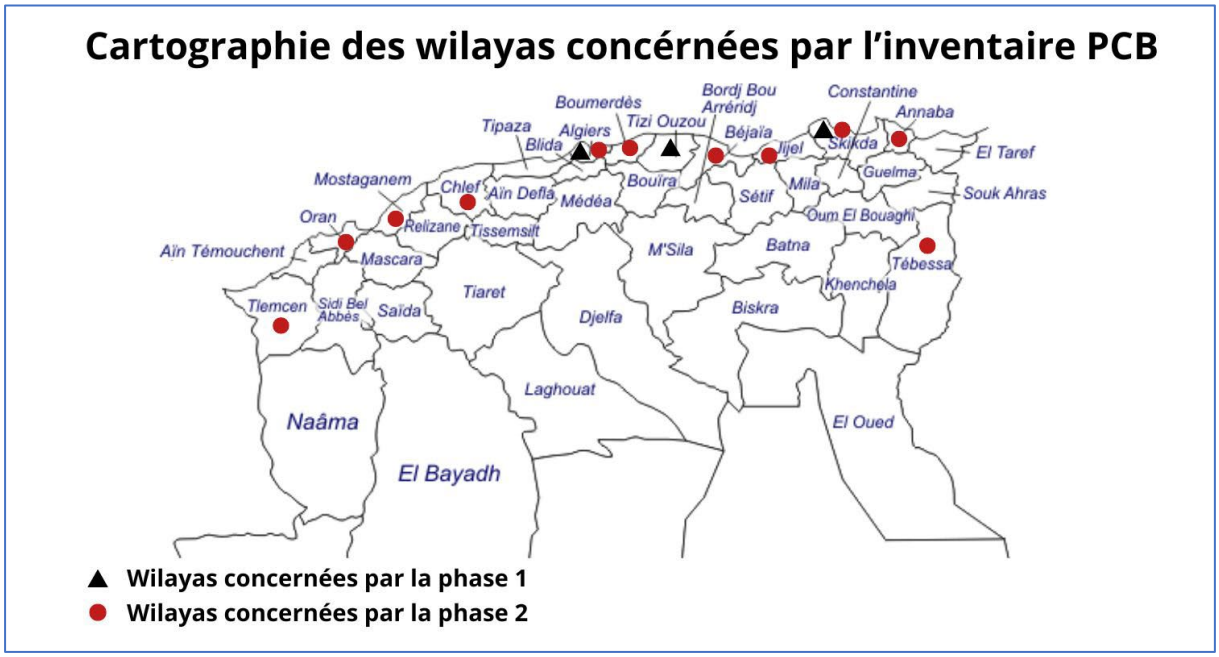
18. In total, 418 tons of contaminated oil, including 237 electrical transformers contaminated with PCB are disposed in Phase 1. In Phase 2, an additional 613 tons of PCB will be disposed consisting of 480 transformers, 105 capacitors and 189 drums. These will be drained/ packed to be exported and shipped from 10 sites in 3 Wilayas (administrative regions) under Phase 1 of the contract, and 131 sites in 11 Wilayas under Phase 2, as illustrated in the below map.

19. All shipments of 418 tons will be completed by early November 2024. Treatment in France will be finished by end of March 2025.

20. In this regard, it should be noted that:

a) Basel notification: the current notification raised for Phase 1 of the work is valid till end of January 2025. Work in progress to extend for an additional year to cover the work to be undertaken under Phase 2.

b) Health, Safety and Environmental Management (HSE) Plan has been approved for Phase 1. A new HSE plan will be prepared and submitted for approval by the Ministry of Environment for Phase 2 once the contract is signed.



21. Work is in progress by UNON to extend the current contract with Tredi to include the additional quantity of 613 tons of PCB. It is expected that the contract will be signed before the end of this year. Amended contract will extend till end of March 2026.

Phase 2 PCB Disposal from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Tunisia

22. The drainage, labelling, packaging, transportation, shipment and sound disposal of PCB oils, PCB contaminated oils and PCB equipment from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Tunisia are planned under Phase 2 of the project. To this aim, UNEP/MAP entered into negotiations with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Serbia Regional Office, in April 2024 to engage their services for removal of a total of 698 tons of PCB from the four countries as tabulated above. A draft copy of the Finance Agreement was prepared by UNOPS. UNEP legal department provided its comments. A new version was prepared by UNOPS in line with the recently signed memo between UNEP and UNOPS (May 2024). UNEP/MAP provided its comments to the new Finance Agreement. These comments are presently being addressed by UNOPS. Estimated budget for this work is about USD 3.5 million.

23. In parallel, work progress on the following activities undertaken in the project countries in support of the PCBs disposal work is summarized below:

Albania

24. A PCB inventory was prepared for Albania. This consisted of a desk review of available information; identification and communication with relevant national authorities; conducting sampling and PCBs measurements; and data analysis and interpretation. Inventory findings provided information on the total weight of contaminated oil, with PCB concentrations above 50 mg/kg, and the

expected PCB quantity in contaminated oil, including the operators of the contaminated equipment. The inventory study was completed in April 2024.

25. An Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for PCB sites in Albania is in its final stages. The EMP provides information on legislation, locations, technical data of PCB contaminated equipment, addressing also environmental and health considerations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

26. An Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for PCB sites in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in its final stages. The EMP provides information on legislation, locations, technical data of PCB contaminated equipment, addressing also environmental and health considerations.

Montenegro

27. The Centre for Eco-Toxicological Research of Montenegro (CETI) undertook an assessment of the contamination of the harbor beds with PCBs and its risks at Tivat Bay and Risan Harbour in Montenegro. The assessment provided a summary of previous technical studies and site investigations, followed by sampling campaigns for the sites of Porto Montenegro, Shipyard and Marina "Navar", Tivat Airport, and Port of Risan. Findings were used to undertake an ecological risk assessment to identify areas of concern, assess the severity of the contamination, and determine appropriate strategies for remediation and management.

28. An Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for PCB sites in Montenegro is in its final stage. The EMP provides information on legislation, locations, technical data of PCB contaminated equipment, addressing also environmental and health considerations.

Morocco

29. A PCB inventory was prepared for Morocco. This consisted of a desk review of available information; identification and communication with relevant national authorities; conducting sampling and PCBs measurements; and data analysis and interpretation. Inventory findings provided information on the total weight of contaminated oil, with PCB concentrations above 50 mg/kg, and the expected PCB quantity in contaminated oil, including the operators of the contaminated equipment. The inventory study was completed in June 2023.

Tunisia

30. UNDP is preparing an inventory of potential PCB-containing equipment, including desk review; use of PCB-screening equipment; and laboratory analysis. The terms of reference were finalized and presented to members of the project steering committee on 17 July 2024. Comments were received and integrated in the ToRs which were then approved. First Call for Tender procedure launched was declared unsuccessful as the financial offers for updating the PCB inventory in Tunisia exceeded the budget allocated. Re-publication of the Call for Tender is currently in progress following the review of the ToRs.

Output 1.2: Management and safe storage of 50 tons of mercury wastes

Algeria

31. An Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for sites containing metallic mercury is currently under preparation for Algeria. The EMP provides information on legislation, locations, technical data on sites and equipment contaminated with mercury addressing also environmental and health considerations. It is expected that the EMP will be finalized in December 2024.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

32. The University of Tuzla prepared an Environmentally Sound Management (ESM) plan for mercury disposal/remediation at the HAK 1 Chemical Industrial Complex in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Activities included preparation of an assessment and selection of short-term and long-term risk mitigation measures; mercury waste disposal and implementation of remediation options at HAK 1 site, followed by development of an Environmentally Sound Management plan. The assessment and ESM were completed in April 2024. This assessment was preceded by a prior study to determine the contamination levels of soil and groundwater with mercury. The ground water contamination study was completed in June 2023.

Montenegro

33. The Centre for Eco-Toxicological Research of Montenegro (CETI) undertook an assessment of the contamination of the harbor beds with mercury and its risks at Tivat Bay and Risan Harbour in Montenegro. The assessment provided a summary of previous technical studies and site investigations, followed by sampling campaigns for the sites of Porto Montenegro, Shipyard and Marina "Navar", Tivat Airport, and Port of Risan. Findings were used to undertake an ecological risk assessment to identify areas of concern, assess the severity of the contamination, and determine appropriate strategies for remediation and management.

Tunisia

34. Further to the inventory of mercury carried out in the framework of an EMP for the Kasserine site in Tunisia, approximately 389 tons of mercury waste were identified. UNEP/MAP entered into negotiations with UNOPS, Serbia Regional Office, in April 2024 to engage their services for removal of this mercury waste from Tunisia. Details on the work progress for the preparation of the Finance Agreement, encompassing both PCB and mercury disposal, are presented in the previous section.

35. The Center for Energy, Environment and Technology Research (CIEMAT), in collaboration with TAUW (consulting firm) prepared an Environmental Management Plan for removal of mercury impacted wastes at the "Société Nationale de Cellulose et de Papier Alfa (SNCPA)" in Kasserine, Tunisia. The study examined options for management of contamination including site operations for removal of 387 tons of mercury wastes,[1] health and safety consideration, environmental monitoring and supervision of waste removal works. EMP was completed in May 2024.

36. UNDP completed a socio-economic assessment for mercury (in support of the ratification of the Minamata Convention). An advocacy workshop for the ratification of the Minamata Convention was organized on July 17, 2024. An overview of the results of the socio-economic assessment was presented. The workshop aimed to raise awareness about the Minamata Convention and its multiple benefits as well as about the hazards of mercury and the importance of ratifying the Convention. The workshop provided also an opportunity to present the draft law for ratification of the Convention by garnering broad support and preparing a strong case based on the socio-economic assessment results.

Output 1.3: New POPs reduction and alternatives pilot activities completed

37. The key activities under this output are intended to (i) develop pilot demonstration projects in Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia; and (ii) prepare proposals for expansion into other countries/ replication of successful prevention activities. To this aim, MedWaves progressed in their work during this period as follows:

[1] As well as 35.5 tons of PCB contaminated transformer

Lebanon

38. Work was completed on the inventory of the import and use of PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonate), HBCD (hexabromocyclododecane), and SCCP (short-chain chlorinated paraffins) in 2023, according to the respective sectors selected.

39. Based on the completed inventory, a sampling campaign was conducted in Lebanon in 2023. The campaign focused on the analysis of PFOS in firefighting foam samples, as well as sediments and groundwater samples. It also included HBCD in polystyrene panels and landfill leachates, and SCCP in PVC production. Laboratory analyses have been completed, and data interpretation is also finished. A conclusive document has already been shared with the national focal point for comments.

40. With regards to the regulatory framework for updating national legislation on PFOs, HBCD, and SCCP in Lebanon, no new activity has been undertaken yet.

Morocco

41. Work is completed on the inventory of import and use of PFOS and HBCD in Morocco. Relevant information was used to identify the sampling points in 2023.

42. A sampling campaign was conducted for PFOS and HBCD in Morocco. Samples were obtained from airports and ports, commercial and industrial enterprises utilizing polyurethane foam, and urban landfills. Work was completed in June 2024. In total, 46 samples were collected and sent to CETI in Montenegro for laboratory analyses. A report on findings will be ready by end of 2024.

43. A proposal for updating the regulatory framework in Morocco is under preparation. It will be completed by end of 2024. The legal framework will address existing regulatory gaps in national laws related to the management of new POPs and will propose improvements to these regulations. The updated regulatory framework will also provide:

a) A directive proposal to ensure governance of the use of new POPs in the construction sector at the national level.
b) Regulatory guidelines providing proposed orientations for a framework that controls the lifecycle of HBCD and PFOS from importation to disposal.
c) Template regulations of new POPs emphasizing the need for chemical substance registration.
d) Update of the current regulation on “Imported Articles” to include specific provisions for those containing new POPs listed under the Stockholm Convention.

44. With regards to preparation of the pilot project/ case study, several exchanges with Morocco have taken place. Finally, a proposal was submitted in September 2024 titled "Assessment of POPs in Coastal Sediments at Potential Mediterranean Hot Spots in Northern Morocco". Due to lack of sufficient budget, the matter was not pursued any further.

Tunisia

45. Work is completed on the inventory of import and use of PFOS and HBCD in Tunisia in 2023. Relevant information was used to identify the sampling points.

46. A sampling campaign was conducted for PFOS and HBCD in Tunisia. The vast majority of samples came from different national offices of the National Civil Protection Authority (ONPC) and from commercial and industrial enterprises utilizing polyurethane foam, as well as urban landfills. Work was completed in June 2024. In total, 46 samples were collected and sent to CETI in Montenegro for laboratory analyses. A report on findings will be ready by end of 2024.

47. A proposal for developing the relevant regulatory framework is under preparation to be completed by end of 2024. The framework will address existing regulatory gaps in national laws related to the management of new POPs and will propose improvements to these regulations. The updated regulatory framework will also provide for:

a) A draft regulatory framework regulating the lifecycle of these products, from importation to disposal.
b) Update of current regulation on “Imported Articles” to include specific provisions for those containing new POPs listed under the Stockholm Convention.
c) Regulatory guidelines providing proposed orientations for the control of the lifecycle of HBCD and PFOS from importation to disposal.
d) Water and air regulations with discharge limit values and monitoring mechanisms for environmental releases (water, air) of HBCD and PFOS.
e) Incentives to encourage the private sector to adopt these alternatives to new POPs.

Other countries

48. The conclusions of the 4th Steering Committee Meeting of CP1.1 (March 2024) requested the countries to engage MedWaves and/or MED POL to propose pilot projects for further consideration as part of the work undertaken by MedWaves. Proposals should include a work plan, required budget, and expected outcomes in terms of tons of POPs prevented, to be reviewed, with a decision made at the current Steering Committee meeting. Based on this conclusion, MedWaves worked with a number of countries. To this extent, below are some of the proposals:

a) Bosnia and Herzegovina: initial contacts in July 2024 allowed to discuss a potential project focusing on Neum Bay. A pilot project was presented in September 2024 titled "Pilot Project Proposal: Screening and Assessment of POPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina's Mediterranean Region," with a budget of $100,000. The country showed interest, but funding is yet to be identified.

b) Libya: Initial contacts allowed to explore different potential projects. Primary focus was on pilot projects in Benghazi, which was heavily affected by the war between 2014 and 2017; Sirte City affected by the war between 2011 and 2016; and Tripoli which had witnessed conflicts in 2011, 2014 and 2019. However, all three areas lack prior POPs studies or data availability. A pilot project was presented in September 2024, titled "Pilot Project Proposal: Screening and Assessment of POPs in Benghazi," with a budget of $100,000. The country showed interest, but funding is yet to be identified.

c) Montenegro: A number of projects were explored as potential pilot projects. However, the cost estimates were prohibitive for the disposal of hazardous chemicals according to our budget, even though the country was interested in participating.

Output 1.4: Mercury reduction through pilot activities on mercury alternatives

49. The key activities developed under this output provide for (i) identifying/verifying national institutions and hospitals with mercury containing wastes in Lebanon and Tunisia; (ii) undertaking an inventory of mercury wastes in the medical facilities; (iii) developing awareness and training activities; (iv) providing legal support for the selected actions aiming at updating national legislation related to mercury products use in hospitals; (v) providing technical support to substitution of mercury-containing devices in hospitals, including through co-financing; and (vi) identification of case studies, stories to be actively disseminated through the KMS (knowledge management system). To this aim, MedWaves progressed in their work during this period as follows:

Lebanon

50. A framework regulation aiming at updating national legislation related to mercury products use in hospitals was prepared and submitted in 2023. No comments were received to date.

51. Work has been completed for identification/verification of national institutions and hospitals with mercury containing wastes in Lebanon. A national inventory of mercury wastes in the medical facilities was also completed in 2023.

52. With regards to substitution of mercury devices, various options were considered. None was found to be feasible and no further action was taken in Lebanon in this respect.

Tunisia

53. A framework regulation on the management and disposal of mercury is under preparation. The final report is not completed yet.

54. A National Inventory of mercury release is being written. The final report is under preparation. Findings indicate a significant reduction (≈1.3) in the annual mercury release to the environment from 2015 to 2022. This improvement is closely related to new regulations by the Ministry of Health (2018, 2023) concerning Hg-thermometers and dental amalgams.

55. With regards to substitution of mercury devices, various options were considered. None was found to be feasible as new regulations had addressed aspects related to reduction of mercury release into the environment, indicating that no further action may be taken in this regard.

56. A report on the management of mercury-contaminated waste; identification of hotspots (e.g., chlor-alkali industries, industrial processes, production of virgin mercury, mining slag heaps, etc.); and mercury levels in lagoons and nearby marine environments is currently under preparation.

57. A proposal was raised to the Ministry of Environment to undertake a health risk assessment in Tunisia. However, no feedback on this proposal was provided yet. Other initiatives were explored in lieu of this assessment.

58. Various preventive actions in healthcare facilities were investigated for addressing health risks resulting from mercury, but it was found that such preventive actions are already in place.

Component 2: International Waters

59. Planned activities under Component 2 are dedicated to the identification of priority actions that will increase environmental and socioeconomic benefits in the region and strengthen countries' capacities to monitor and report on environmental trends to support evidence-based policy making and decisions. The centerpiece of Component 2 is an update of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem, including a gender assessment. This gender assessment is expected to allow for a better understanding of the crosscutting issues of gender, water, and environmental security, and to provide updated inputs for the overall MedProgramme gender agenda.

60. Component 2 encompasses also a report that illustrates the impacts of the Child Project activities on progress towards the achievement of MedProgramme's objectives as well as of countries' commitments in the context of the SDGs. Another important activity of Component 2 is the provision of support to the GEF eligible countries of the Mediterranean to upgrade their national monitoring programmes in line with IMAP requirements to also cover the offshore marine areas, and to ensure better availability and accessibility of monitoring data. This is accomplished through the development of an offshore monitoring strategy; the selection of 20 sites from which 5 sites will be chosen for piloting the implementation of this strategy.

61. Component 2 consists of 4 outputs:

a) Output 2.1: Updated Transboundary Diagnostic Assessment including gender assessment.
b) Output 2.2: Report on progress to impacts.
c) Output 2.3: Offshore monitoring strategy and identification of 20 locations for the offshore monitoring stations.
d) Output 2.4: Data sharing policy for the Mediterranean.

62. Work progress for each of the above outputs is explained below.

Output 2.1: Updated Transboundary Diagnostic Assessment including gender assessment

63. In view of the need to prepare a summary TDA policy document which will include findings from the Mediterranean Quality Status Report 2023 (MED QSR), as well as the identified national transboundary priority issues and associated impacts based on pollutants' releases and proposed mitigation measures, small-scale financing agreements (SSFAs) were signed with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Lebanon, Morocco, Libya aiming to support the preparation of the NAPs. Two additional SSFAs will be signed by end of 2024 with Algeria and Tunisia. Countries are expected to identify national transboundary priority issues and assess their impacts based on the regional transboundary diagnostic analyses presented in the draft TDA report. The SSFAs are co-financed by UNEP/MAP.

64. In parallel, during the period from March to September 2024, Plan Bleu is progressing with the following activities:

a) Analytical work and drafting MED 2050 final report. This report is planned to be finalized and published in the fourth quarter of 2024.
b) Preparation of a workshop to be held in Aix-en-Provence (France) the 8 November 2024 in cooperation with Aix-Marseille University. The purpose of this workshop is to present and discuss the MED 2050 scenarios with academics and local representatives around 3 round tables in the morning and the afternoon is dedicated to small group work on transition paths with a panel of around 40 students from 3 Masters.

Output 2.2: Report on progress to impacts

65. The development of the Knowledge Management (KM) platform is in progress with the support of GRID Geneva. Trial data have been provided for the pilot utilization of the platform by the GEF eligible countries. The KM platform was inaugurated during the 2nd Annual Stocktaking Meeting which was held in Podgorica, Montenegro in April 2024 and it is now available with restricted access. Access to the KM platform will be fully opened once the MedProgramme KM expert is on board.

Output 2.3: Offshore monitoring strategy and identification of 20 locations for the offshore monitoring stations

66. MED POL is preparing a draft offshore monitoring strategy aligned with national IMAPs for GEF eligible countries. The strategy includes a list of Common Indicators to be monitored at offshore monitoring sites, along with monitoring operational modalities, taking into consideration the significant progress already made by the UNEP/MAP regarding the IMAP implementation from 2018 to 2024.

67. The draft offshore monitoring strategy has been reviewed and comments addressed along with the proposed common indicators.

68. Twenty (20) offshore monitoring stations in the 9 GEF eligible countries have been identified based on the application of the following criteria:

a) The geographical coverage of the entire length of the Mediterranean coastline of the 9 GEF eligible countries
b) The general Mediterranean seawater circulation
c) The location of land-based pollution sources, defined by the countries concerned in their respective IMAP programs and the QSR 2023
d) The location of areas of concern because of specific conditions
e) The bathymetry of the offshore areas
f) The distance from the shore, given avoiding coastal interferences

69. These 20 locations are distributed as follows:

a) Western Mediterranean Sea (6 locations); Central Mediterranean Sea (8 locations); Levantine Sea (2 locations); Adriatic Sea (4 locations);
b) Distance from shore: 10 to 30 km;
c) Depth: 20 to 500 meters;
d) Pristine Area (6 locations); Hotspot area (14 locations);
e) All 20 locations are relevant to Common Indicators CI-13, CI-14, and CI-23, and partially relevant to CI-1, CI-2, CI-3, CI-4, CI-5, CI-7, CI-8, CI-9, CI-10, CI-11, CI-12, CI-17 (Bio), CI-18, and CI-20.

70. Out of the 20 proposed locations, five (5) locations where pilot offshore monitoring will be conducted have been designated.

71. The five selected countries will be assisted, through an SSFA modality, to ensure the implementation of selected IMAP indicators at these newly established offshore monitoring stations.

72. To date, draft SSFAs have been shared with three countries for their review and inputs, and discussion is ongoing with the remaining two countries.

Output 2.4: Data sharing policy for the Mediterranean

73. Work for developing a data sharing policy is intended to include:

a) Assessment of the existing regional databases, governance mechanisms and data sharing approaches.
b) Review of structure, functions and content of national databases/ IT platforms.
c) Recommendations on the design of IT model to connect national into a regional network/ platform.
d) Development of regional data sharing policy to facilitate reporting and use of IMAP data.
e) Promoting regional cooperation and exchange of best practices.

74. Considering that the end target of Output 2.4 is the formulation of a "regional data sharing policy to facilitate reporting and use of IMAP data, prepared for the deliberation of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention," and noting that UNEP/MAP's Programme of Work (2020-2021) included an activity on the "development of the MAP data management policy, including on IMAP InfoSystem," a decision was made to link this work to the MAP data policy, which was approved by COP22 (Decision IG.25/10, December 2021). In this regard, it is worth noting that the MAP data policy was based on an assessment of existing regional databases, governance mechanisms and data sharing approaches and included the development of a regional data sharing policy to facilitate reporting and use of IMAP data; aspects which are also relevant to Output 2.4 of Child Project 1.1. To this aim, the work planned under Output 2.4 (i.e. data sharing policy for the Mediterranean) was considered as completed as far as it concerns the "assessment of the existing regional databases, governance mechanisms and data sharing approaches" as well as the "development of regional data sharing policy to facilitate reporting and use of IMAP data." These aspects are being streamlined into the design/development of the INFO/MAP system that integrates the data sharing policy of the MedProgramme.

Component 3: Monitoring and evaluation and information dissemination

75. Component 3 is conceived to ensure that knowledge generated by CP1.1 is effectively used for implementation of project activities and is shared within the wider MedProgramme stakeholders. Component 3 also oversees the execution of the project's monitoring and evaluation plan. The knowledge management activities include the development of interactive visualizations of chemicals inventories across the countries using the MapX application, the preparation of case studies to document results and best practices from the project's activities on pollution reduction as well as the

TDA process, and the elaboration of a data sharing protocol to support the monitoring activities foreseen in Component 2. Component 3 also includes activities supporting the project's monitoring and evaluation plan, such as regular monitoring of project results and delivery, quarterly progress and financial reports, annual reports and effective documentation of lessons learnt. It includes periodic independent evaluation of project results and achievement of intended outcomes, through external reviews at project midterm stage and upon completion.

76. Component 3 consists of 2 key outputs:

a) Output 3.1: Knowledge Management strategy shares knowledge from Child Project 1.1.

b) Output 3.2: Regular monitoring and evaluation of project progress and results.

77. Work progress for each of the above outputs is explained below.

Output 3.1: Knowledge Management strategy shares knowledge from Child Project 1.1

78. The main KM activities carried out during this period took place during the panel discussions of the ASM meeting held in Podgorica, Montenegro from 22 to 24 April 2024. As part of this meeting, KM was featured in roundtable discussions whereby the operational aspects of collection and disposal of PCB was presented. Also, information was provided to meeting participants of new POPs under the title of "the invisible threat: new POPs in water - challenges in detection and prevention."

79. As part of the ASM meeting, the knowledge management (KM) platform - the “go to” place for knowledge for the Child Projects within the MedProgramme was launched. Panel discussions featured also knowledge management and dissemination. Data from the PCB inventories in Albania, Algeria, BiH and Montenegro were added to existing data from Lebanon, Algeria and posted on MapX (with restricted access) providing quantitative data on PCBs quantities for disposal and exact locations/countries of origin.

80. As part of the ASM meeting, panel discussions were also held. Representatives of countries and executing partners of the MedProgramme participated in these discussions. Key messages from the discussions indicated that:

a) KM platform is to be used to support the preparation of documented story maps and replication atlas in order to establish linkages between the implementation and delivery progress and changes in the environmental indicators and data displayed on the Dashboard;
b) Additional relevant datasets produced or gathered in the framework of the implementation of the MedProgramme should, where possible, be published on the platform;
c) A Task Force should be created to include participating countries to steer the development and utilization of the Platform, in particular concerning the relevancy of the information posted;
d) The KM platform was noted to be essential for ensuring proper visibility to planned, ongoing and finalized activities and deliverables under each Child Project. Moreover, it was noted that the KM platform can serve as a mechanism for promoting the possible extension and replication of MedProgramme actions

81. The ASM meeting requested the Executing Partners, under each Child Project to provide continuous and sustainable contribution in order to ensure that the MedProgramme community is informed and that potential synergies and collaboration among Child Project and Countries are timely identified and activated.

82. Finally, two videos were produced under CP1.1. The first was filmed at the HAK1 Site; a decommissioned chemicals factory in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The 2nd video was filmed for sediment sampling at the Port of Montenegro by the Center for Ecotoxicological Research of Montenegro (CETI) and sediment testing at the laboratory of CETI in Podgorica. In both video interviews were conducted with various stakeholders and government officials. Scripts and storyboards were developed for both films based on interview quotes from all participants and

supplemented with voiceover narration. The two films were edited of under three minutes, created motion graphics, utilized UNEP and all partner branding graphics according to guidelines. A music and a professional voiceover artist were procured for this purpose.

Output 3.2: Regular monitoring and evaluation of project progress and results

83. During the present period, quarterly progress and expenditure reports have been submitted for the respective quarters for Child Project 1.1. Also, the PIR for 2023/2024 was submitted and approved by GEF. The mid-term evaluation was concluded by an independent consultant in August 2024. Recommendations are included in the annex to this report.

84. Finally, it should be noted that no co-financing reports were received from the countries in line with their commitments to the MedProgramme. None was listed under the PIR.

Annex

Executive Summary
Mid-Term Review (August 2024)
Child Project 1.1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

1. The objective of the UNEP/GEF project "Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hot Spots and Measuring Progress to Impacts" (GEF ID 9684) is to achieve measurable reductions in levels of POPs and mercury in priority Mediterranean coastal hot spots and catchment areas to be achieved through a multi- focal area collaboration between the respective two project components related to the GEF Chemicals and Waste and International Waters focal areas. It is the Child Project 1.1 of the regional Mediterranean Sea Programme.

This Review

2. This document presents the final report for the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the MedProgramme Child Project 1.1 "Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hot Spots and Measuring Progress to Impacts". In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy, MTRs are undertaken approximately half-way through the project implementation to analyse whether the project is on track, what problems and challenges the project is encountering and which corrective actions are required.

3. As a standard requirement for all projects financed by GEF, this MTR was initiated by the Implementing Agency, in this case the UNEP Industry and Economy Division.

4. The purpose of this MTR is to assess the project performance to date (in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, determine the likelihood of the project delivering the planned outputs and achieving its intended outcomes. It covers all activities undertaken in the framework of the project since the official start of the project implementation in April 2020.

Key Findings

5. The particular strength of the project design is the aim to develop linkages between the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions and their delivery mechanisms at national and regional level for capacity on chemicals and waste to be linked across thematic and sectoral boundaries. The justification of the project is based on the fundamental and pressing issue linking environmental quality and human health.

6. By focusing on the Barcelona Convention processes and its governance mechanisms, the project offers a framework for the regional cooperation with the potential to consolidate all the information derived from various fragmented initiatives implemented in the Mediterranean and produce a comprehensive and coherent diagnostic focused on transboundary issues. Another strength of the project is its focus on harmonization of the existing data platforms, monitoring protocols and common indicators to comply with the Barcelona Convention's ecosystem approach-based Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP).

7. The linking of the Chemicals and Waste and International Waters components under the umbrella of a single Child Project was driven by the aim to see how the reduction of land- based pollution by POPs and mercury is reflected in reduced environmental stress and improved status of coastal waters in the Mediterranean.

8. The above underlying idea of the project is at the same time also its main weakness as it aims to combine interventions on scattered land-based pollution hotspots as purely national initiatives with very few possibilities for regional grouping with transboundary assessment of the marine ecosystem as essentially regional in nature. Moreover, reduction of land-based pollution and work on transboundary issues in coastal regions involve different stakeholders and face dissimilar technical as well as political challenges.

9. The project is on track for delivery of the two waste reduction outputs under Component 1 in terms of management and safe disposal of PCBs and management and safe storage of mercury

waste (Outputs 1.1 and 1.2), although the progress has been relatively slow as a result of the initial delays in contracting the waste removal services and time- consuming procedures for obtaining all documentation required in line with the provisions of the Basel Convention.

10. On the contrary, the progress on the two outputs addressing prevention of waste has been only marginal, in particular on Output 1.4 dealing with prevention of mercury waste. The project is behind the planned schedule, and it is likely that it will not achieve the planned waste prevention target by the original project completion date (end of March 2025). Recently, the project got approved extension until March 2026.

11. While there has been visible progress towards development of three out of four outputs of Component 2, these are general outputs not directly linked to identification of impacts of the specific land-based pollution reduction addressed through the waste reduction and prevention outputs of Component 1. Implementation of the fourth output that is based on analysis and compilation of information generated under Component 1 has not started yet.

12. Despite invitations to PSC meetings included GEF Focal Points and the Project Focal Points, representation in the PSC meetings of national focal institutions involved in the International Waters part of the project was weak for several countries. Consequently, discussion at the PSC meetings has almost exclusively focused on implementation of the Chemicals and Waste part of the project with almost non-existent focus on links and cooperation between the two project components.

13. The project reporting has been conducted in line with the requirements of GEF and the progress reports found to be sufficiently detailed and the reporting formats in compliance with the UNEP and GEF reporting standards. In general, the project reporting ensured transparent information flow across the executing partners and the project key stakeholders.

14. However, access of the MTR consultant to various project-related documents, such as workplans, budget revisions, terms of references, contracts and their deliverables, was possible only on basis of ad-hoc requests as there is no repository of the relevant project documentation required for the MTR.

15. The project's financial resources have been managed in compliance with relevant UNEP/GEF financial management standards and procedures. The project financial information broken down by components and years of implementation was available for the MTR. However, information on actually realised co-financing by the project partners and beneficiary has not been systematically tracked during the project implementation.

Conclusions

16. The project has successfully enabled collaboration among a large set of stakeholders, including high ranking national authorities and educational/research institutions. It has also taken advantage of complementarities with parallel projects implemented by sister UN agencies in several participating countries and achieved thus synergies and faster progress towards the planned results while making savings on project financial resources.

17. Furthermore, the project has been successful in building ownership, interest and commitment of the participating government institutions and stakeholders despite political challenges in few project countries and related difficulties in planning and execution of specific activities in those countries. However, the very slow progress towards ratification of the Minamata Convention in two project countries hampers implementation of specific activities on mercury waste disposal.

18. The effectiveness of implementation was affected by Covid-19 pandemic in the first year of the project, slow and complicated procurement of waste disposal services, lack of coordination at the level of some participating countries, as well as by temporary shortfall of staffing at the Project Coordination Unit. The project team has taken several steps of adaptive management in order to address the above issues.

19. The project is now at the start of the 5th and last year of implementation. Due to the combined effect of covid-19 restrictions in the 1st year and slow progress of work on delivery of some sub-components in the following years, several project activities were delayed and/or modified. Despite several adaptive management measures of the project team, the delivery of some outputs has been slower than expected. The executing partners expressed uncertainty whether all activities for delivery of planned results could be completed within the remaining time period of the project. Therefore, extension of the project will be proposed under recommendations.

20. Based on the findings from this review, the project has demonstrated strong performance in the areas of adaptive management, reporting and communication. Areas that require attention in the remaining project time period include delivery of POPs and mercury waste prevention outputs, monitoring of co-financing information, as well as links between the institutions involved in the CW and IW components at the level of participating countries.

Lessons Learned

21. Lesson 1: Experience from implementation of the project has demonstrated the need for full staffing of the dedicated PCU to ensure timely implementation, reporting and delivery of planned outputs.

22. Lesson 2: The lack of a TOC and 'output to outcome' analysis during the project design resulted in lost opportunities to better test project assumptions and drivers, which would have provided valuable data to inform and refine project implementation strategies and approach.

23. Lesson 3: There are positive and negative aspects of UN-to-UN transfer agreements. For conclusion of such agreements, the UN partner organisations need time for review and approval of specific agreement provisions. While such agreement might meet the needs in case of ineffective coordination structures at the country level, the speed of implementation might be affected by specific rules and regulations of the receiving UN partner.

24. Lesson 4: Weak national stakeholder representation in the PSC for the IW component of the project did not ensure internal coherence and links between the two project components at the level of the participating countries. The national representation should be based on consultations on CP 1.1 at the level of each participating country.

25. Lesson 5: Linking the component comprising concrete measures for reduction of coastal pollution hotspots with a component on general coastal pollution monitoring does not ensure ability to track impacts of the reduced pollution.

Recommendations

26. Recommendation 1: Project extension: The project executing partners should prepare estimates for completion of their respective activities that will serve for preparation of a justified proposal for project extension of at least 6 months to be presented for approval by the extraordinary PSC meeting in September 2024. This proposal should also include budget revision to cover the increased costs of project management during the project extension period.

27. Recommendation 2: Stakeholder representation: The project executing partners should ensure that representation of all project countries at the PSC meetings includes also national focal institutions responsible for Component 2.

28. Recommendation 3: Budget revision: The Executing Agency (MedPCU) should request approval of the Implementing Agency for revision of the project budget to repurpose part of the budget for mercury disposal for increase of the amount of PCB waste disposed.

29. Recommendation 4: Revision of PRF target: MedProgramme PCU should elaborate justified estimation of quantities of PCB waste that can be realistically disposed of within the remaining project time and budget and prepare a proposal for revised end-of-project target for Output 1.1 for presentation to the next PSC meeting.

30. Recommendation 5: Reporting: The MedProgramme PCU should systematically collect information on the actually realised co-financing broken down by sources of co- financing and report this information in 2024 PIR and subsequent annual PIRs.

31. Recommendation 6: Repository of documents for TE: The MedPCU should systematically compile all documents relevant for the project MTR and TE in line with the "List of Documents for MTR" and store them in a dedicated repository of project documentation available to project evaluators.

32. Recommendation 7: Monitoring of PCB and mercury sites: In order to see direct impacts of the pollution reduction, the project partners should consider support for establishment of pollution monitoring programmes at the PCB- and mercury- contaminated sites.

33. Recommendation 8: PCU strengthening: The MedPCU should strengthen its administrative arm through accelerated recruitment of the Finance Budget Officer and Finance Assistant of the MedPCU.

34. Recommendation 9: Gender assessment: The MedPCU should ensure that the gender specialist recruited by UNOPS conducts assessment of implementation of the CP 1.1 Gender Action Plan and provide recommendations for a more targeted approach of future interventions so that these can benefit from the gender-responsive actions and capacity building.