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Anavyssos, Greece, 27 -28 May 2025

Agenda Item 6: Terms of Reference and Flow of Interaction for the Correspondence Groups on Monitoring and Online Working Groups

Terms of Reference and Flow of Interaction for the Correspondence Groups on Monitoring and Online Working Groups

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Note by the Secretariat

COP22 held in Antalya, Turkey, in December 2021, adopted the “Governance Mechanism for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in the Mediterranean” (Decision IG.25/3, Annex I).

COP23 held in Portoroz, Slovenia, in December 2023, adopted “The 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report and a Renewed Ecosystem Approach Policy in the Mediterranean” (Decision IG.26/3) took note of the “Terms of Reference for the CORMONs, CORESA and Online Working Groups and Flow of Interaction between Ecosystem Approach and MAP Governing Bodies” as presented in Annex IV of the Decision.

The Secretariat further submitted this document to the 11th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (EcAp CG) with aim to: (a) upgrade the ToRs for Correspondence Groups CORMONs and COR ESA and online Working Groups (OWGs) to align with COP22 Decision; and (b) to 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.

Further to the Conclusions and Recommendations of the 11th EcAp CG Meeting, the respective Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group Meetings (i.e. CORMONs on Biodiversity and Fisheries, Coast and Hydrography, Pollution and Marine Litter) should review the parts relevant to the CORMON mandate including flow and interaction.

In this regard, the present document is submitted to the Joint Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Pollution and Marine Litter Monitoring (Anavyssos, Greece, 27 -28 May 2025) for review and further consideration with the final scope to integrate this part as a separate Annex in the draft Decision for upgrading the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Policy and Roadmap in the Mediterranean. The present Joint Meeting of CORMONs on Pollution and Marine Litter Monitoring should review only the parts related to the CORMON, including the first column of Annex I.

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Terms of reference (TORs) for Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMONs), Economic and social analysis (COR ESA) and Online Working Groups (OWGs)

1. Background and rationale

1. Since COP15 (Almeria, Spain, 15-18 January 2008, Decision IG.17/6), Contracting Parties decided to progressively apply the Ecosystem Approach to the management of human activities that may affect the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment for the promotion of sustainable development, with the overall objective of achieving the Good Environmental Status (GES) of the Mediterranean Sea and Coasts. COP15 also set out the governance of the Mediterranean Action Plan Barcelona Convention system, its goals and principles, and the mandates for the CU and the MAP Components (Decision IG.17/5).

2. COP17 (Paris, France, 8-10 February 2012) established the EcAp Coordination Group and adopted 11 Ecological Objectives (EOs) with a suite of associated Operational Objectives and indicators (Decision IG.20/4). The EcAp Coordination Group consists of MAP Focal Points, as per Decision IG.21/3, and its Terms of Reference were agreed by the Bureau (BUR/75/5, July 2012).

3. At their COP19 (Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016), the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme and related Assessment Criteria (IMAP), (Decision IG.22/7).

4. COP22 Antalya, Turkey, December 2021 endorsed an updated governance mechanism for the implementation of the ecosystem approach in the Mediterranean in the framework of UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention (Decision IG.25/03). Contracting Parties agreed to “Renew their commitment to the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach and endorse the Governance Mechanism for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach policy in the Mediterranean, set out in Annex I to this Decision”. The Decision, in its Annex I, states, “every effort to be made by the Secretariat to streamline and ensure the technical documents are cleared by the respective CORMON and MAP Component/Thematic Focal Points in line with their mandates, as appropriate, before they are submitted to the decision-making bodies”.

5. Moreover, COP 23 (Portoroz, Slovenia, 5-8 December 2023), took note of the Terms of Reference for the COMRONs, CORESA and Online Working Groups and the flow of interaction between Ecosystem Approach and MAP governing bodies (Annex IV of Decision IG.26/3).

6. The Secretariat further submitted this document to the 11th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (EcAp CG) with aim to: (a) upgrade the ToRs for Correspondence Groups CORMONS and COR ESA and online Working Groups (OWGs) to align with COP22 Decision; and (b) to 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.

7. In line with the consultation process initiated with the Contracting Parties after the 11th EcAp CG Meeting, the final scope is to include this document as a stand-alone annex into the under-preparation draft Decision for upgrading the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Policy and Roadmap in the Mediterranean.

2. Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMONs)

2.1 Composition

8. The Correspondence Groups on monitoring (CORMONs) are established for each thematic cluster – Biodiversity and Fisheries; Pollution and Marine Litter; and Coast and Hydrography.

9. CORMONs are composed of national experts designated by the Contracting Parties possessing the necessary expertise and experience in line with the mandates of respective CORMON for IMAP implementation. They can be designated by the MAP Focal Points/EcAp CG members or by the thematic/MAP Components' Focal Points, preferably in consultation with each other.

2.2 Operation

10. The CORMONs' work is supported by the respective MAP Component: MED POL for Pollution and Marine Litter; PAP/RAC for Coast and Hydrography; and SPA/RAC for Biodiversity and Fisheries. Technical and scientifically related tasks may be supported by external experts, during preparation of the documents for consideration of respective CORMONs. The overall coordination of the work of CORMONs remains with the Coordinating Unit and is carried out in accordance with MAP Programme of Work (POW) priorities and implementation of the EcAp Roadmap and Policy.

11. CORMONs may meet physically or by teleconference, depending on the agenda, the volume of work and documents to be considered. Provisions for CORMON meetings numbers, main deliverables and modality are made in the MAP POW.

2.3 CORMON Mandates

12. CORMONs have the primary role to guide and deliver the implementation of technical and scientific aspects of IMAP and delivery of QSR with support from the Secretariat and MAP Components and foster regional and sub-regional collaboration and exchange of best practices and know-how with regards to monitoring and assessment of marine and coastal environment.

13. The operation of the CORMONs should recognize that the implementation of the ecosystem approach is comprehensive in terms of the multidisciplinary and scientific context of the documents that need to be discussed, and therefore iterative in terms of coordination of the results of work within the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system and at Contracting Party level.

14. Generally, CORMONs are assigned with the preparation and negotiation of the following main types of IMAP products:

- Monitoring guidelines and protocols on, sampling; sample processing analysis/determination; quality assurance (QA); and reporting
- IMAP indicator guidance factsheets
- Areas/scales of assessment, assessment criteria, and guidance for their application
- Assessment methodologies, assessment products and QSR (structure/contents, conclusions)
- Data standards (DS) and data dictionaries (DD)
- Data management QA and QC
- Updates of IMAP & progress reporting on IMAP implementation
- Implementation of national IMAPs
- Proficiency testing
- Capacity building activities
- IMAP related Project outcomes

15. CORMON IMAP products are of a technical and scientific nature, they may impose policy and financial impacts on IMAP implementation. A detailed elaboration of the different levels of responsibilities for consideration and approval of different types of IMAP products is provided in Annex I.

16. Informal Online Working Groups (OWG) may be established by CORMONs in order to provide specific scientific inputs: OWGs are composed of a restricted number of experts and scientists nominated by the Contracting Parties. In their delivery OWGs may be supported by experts mobilised by the Secretariat and MAP Components in accordance with provisions of the approved MAP POW and budget or related projects as appropriate. The tasks and outcome of the work of OWG are defined by the CORMONs. OWGs report to CORMONs. To this aim the chair of the OWG in consultation with the Secretariat/MAP Components presents the outcome of the OWG to CORMON.

17. The informal OWG do not replace the formal Correspondence Groups.

18. Every effort should be made to maintain geographical balance in the composition of the OWG and mobilize high level expertise.

19. No language interpretation is provided by the Secretariat at the OWG, nor are official meeting documents formally disseminated. Members of the OWG are strongly encouraged to provide scientific and technical inputs and support to the Secretariat/MAP Component work with regards to IMAP implementation and delivery of its products.

3. Effective interaction among different MAP bodies

20. The level of interaction between the bodies of the EcAp governance structure and MAP decision making bodies i.e., MAP Components/Thematic Focal Points, MAP Focal Points and COP depends on the nature of the products as detailed in Annex 1, in line with their respective mandates. Annex I also provides information on the type of documents to be reviewed by each body.

21. The present Joint Meeting of CORMONs on Pollution and Marine Litter Monitoring should review only the parts related to the CORMON, including the first column of Annex I.

Annex I

Possible products and interaction between EcAp governance bodies

Annex I: Possible products and interaction between EcAp governance bodies

Note: The present Joint Meeting of CORMONs on Pollution and Marine Litter Monitoring should review only the first column of Annex I.

CORMONs	Component/ Thematic Focal Points (FP)	EcAp Coordination Group (CG)	MAP Focal Points (FP) / COP
1. Monitoring guidelines/ protocols			
Products of a complex scientific and technical nature that may have financial implications for implementation of IMAP.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in the programme of Work (POW).	Coordinating Unit (CU) reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components.	CU reports on progress and related activities of POW and Budget.
2. IMAP indicator guidance factsheets			
Products of a complex scientific and technical nature that may have policy and financial implications.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW. Recommended by CORMONs for no objection procedure.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components. Based on current practice, endorsement by EcAp CG.	Approval of the respective provisions in the POW & budget, as appropriate.
3. Data dictionaries and data standards (DDs and DSs)			
Products of a technical nature.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW. Recommended by CORMONs for no objection for their submission to EcAp CG meeting and approval of the related provisions in the POW.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components. Based on current practice, endorsement by EcAp CG, for MAP FP.	Approval of the respective provisions in the POW & budget, as appropriate.
4. Assessment criteria			
Products of a complex scientific and technical nature that may have policy implications, including allocation of financial resources for implementation of IMAP.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW. Review and endorsement for submission to EcAp CG meeting.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components. Review and endorsement for submission to MAP FP.	Review and approval for submission to COP. COP Decision

5. Assessment methods & products, QSR structure, contents & conclusions			
Scientific products with recommendations for COP consideration.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW. No objection from the scientific point of view; endorsement of recommendations. Recommendation for transmission to EcAp CG meeting.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components. Endorsement of key findings and recommendations for submission to MAP Focal Points.	General review of main findings and recommendations and approval for submission to COP. In depth review of the related draft Decision body for submission to the COP. COP Decision.
6. Thematic assessments			
Thematic assessments prepared and approved.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW. Overall discussion and feedback on assessment recommendations. Endorsement for publication.	CU report on the progress; review of recommendations as appropriate. Endorsement of key findings and recommendations for submission to MAP Focal Points as appropriate.	Review of potential activities included in the POW. Review and endorse as appropriate of the key findings and recommendations.
7. IMAP development and update			
Scientific and policy products.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW. Review and approval for transmission to EcAp CG meeting.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components Review and endorsement for submission to MAP FP	Responsible for approving all updates of IMAP implementation and approving the financial resources to address the needs as proposed by the respective CORMON and Component FPs. Review and approval for submission to COP, COP Decision

8. Implementation of National IMAPs

National IMAPs are of a technical nature with the implications for financial and policy aspects. The respective CORMON should be responsible for providing the recommendations in relation to: (i) the effectiveness of implementation of the National IMAPs related to the relevant IMAP Cluster; (ii) the gaps identified in the process of the National IMAPs implementation; (iii) the needs to be addressed, including technical, human resources, governance and financial aspects; (iv) harmonization of National IMAPs implementation; and (v) mechanisms/sources/means that could provide solutions and be used to improve implementation of National IMAPs.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW. Report on the progress, POW provisions as appropriate.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components.	CU reports on progress and related activities of POW and Budget as appropriate.
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9. Proficiency Testing

Proficiency Testing (PT) is of a technical nature, based on the complex scientifically related procedures; however, with certain implications for policy decision-makers.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW Review of the outcome of Proficiency testing and delivery of recommendations to Focal Points; consideration of their outcome in the design of the POW as appropriate.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components.	CU reports on progress and related activities of POW and Budget as appropriate.
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10. Capacity Building Activities

Products of a technical character.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities by CORMONs for their inclusion in POW.	CU Report on the progress.	CU reports on progress and related activities of POW and Budget.
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11. Data management/QA/QC

Products of a technical nature.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW as appropriate.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components.	CU reports on progress and related activities of POW and Budget as appropriate.
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COR ESA	Component/ Thematic Focal Points	EcAp Coordination Group	MAP Focal Points / COP
Review of relevant assessments/studies			
COR ESA is responsible for reviewing analyses and assessments carried out for EcAp that are of relevance for social and economic considerations. In particular:	Report on the progress	Report on the progress	Report on the progress
Socio-economic assessments.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components. Endorsement of assessment by the EcAp CG. Possible recommendations to MAP FP meeting.	CU reports on progress and related activities of POW and Budget. Approval of assessment.
Socio-economic chapter of the Mediterranean Quality Status Report (QSR).	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW. No objection from the scientific point of view.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components. Review and Endorsement of the chapter.	Overall endorsement of the chapter as part of the relevant 2023 MED QSR endorsement COP Decision.
Analyses of the socio-economic aspects of national programmes of measures.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components. Endorsement of analyses, possible recommendations to MAP FP.	Report on the progress. Submission of COR ESA recommendations by the EcAp CG to MAP Focal Points/COP as relevant.
Provide guidelines to support Contracting Parties to undertake socio-economic analyses at the national level.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW. Review and Endorsement and recommend submission to EcAp CG.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components. Review and endorsement.	Report on the progress.
Methodological tools with regard to socio-economic assessments	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW. Review and Endorsement and recommend submission to EcAp CG	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components. Review and endorsement.	Report on the progress