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The 26th Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)

Corinth, Greece, 23 June 2025

Agenda Item 3: Report by the Coordinator on Sustainable Development Activities for the period May 2024- May 2025

Report of the ad hoc Thematic MCSD Meeting of 12-13 February 2025

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UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2025

Introduction

1. Following the kind offer of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Istanbul Centre, and in consultation with the President and Members of the MCSD Steering Committee, the Thematic ad-hoc Meeting of the MCSD was convened on 12-13 February 2025 in Istanbul, Türkiye.

2. The objective of the Meeting was to hold a thematic discussion on the first draft of the updated MSSD, including its flagship initiatives, as well as on the initial elements of the updated Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF).

3. The list of participants is provided in Annex I of the present report.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting

4. The Meeting was opened at 10:00 on Wednesday, 12 February 2025, by Ms. Anne-France Didier, President of the MCSD. Welcome addresses (full statements are provided in Annex IV) were delivered by:

- Mr. Fatih Turan, General Director Environmental Management of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change of Türkiye;
- Ms. Damla Hacıibrahimoğlu, Policy Analyst of OECD Istanbul Centre, on behalf of Ms. Seda Sevgi, Deputy Director of OECD Istanbul Centre;
- Ms. Tatjana Hema, Coordinator of UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention, who inter alia thanked France for the additional financial contribution supporting the implementation of the MCSD meetings in view of the MSSD update.

Agenda item 2: Organizational Matters

a) Adoption of the Provisional Agenda
b) Election of Officers
c) Organization of Work

5. The Coordinator proposed some change in the annotated agenda (UNEP/MED WG.600/2), as follows:

- The Meeting will not have conclusions and recommendations, but an overall agreement on the updated text of the MSSD (UNEP/MED WG.600/4) and on the next steps, in view of the 21st Meeting of the MCSD of June that will have to validate the updated MSSD;
- The Secretariat will present the main conclusions steaming from the independent MSSD Final Evaluation Report (UNEP/MED WG.600/3), not opening the floor for comments as the document is to be discussed and validated by the 21st Meeting of the MCSD.

6. The thematic had hoc Meeting of the MCSD reviewed and adopted the Provisional Agenda with the proposed changes.

7. The Members of the Steering Committee of the MCSD, elected by the 20th Meeting of the MCSD of 14-16 June 2023, in accordance with the MCSD Constitutive Documents, Rule 17 of the Rules of Procedure, served as officers of the Meeting.

Agenda item 3: Final Evaluation of the 2016-2025 Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)

8. Hon. Mr. Pedro Roque, Head of Delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), PAM Vice President and President of the 3rd Standing Committee, welcomed the final evaluation of the MSSD and delivered some comments on sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

9. The Secretariat briefly presented the overall conclusions of the independent MSSD Final Evaluation Report.

10. The MCSD Members commented that the MSSD Final Evaluation Report was well-structured, objective, of good quality, comprehensive as it anchored recommendations on recent developments at the global and EU levels, while highlighting that, overall, the main conclusions of the MSSD Mid-Term evaluation are confirmed. More specific comments included the following: the regional picture on SDGs implementation shall be complemented by the global picture that presents a low rate of achievement of SDGs targets; the local communities shall be further involved in the conception of development polices; lessons learned shall be better highlighted in particular with reference to economic issues; it is important to improve communication, in particular toward the civil society; inclusion of actions on green finance in the updated MSSD is crucial; efforts at national level are also to be highlighted; the Report shall be publicized, as it represents a good model for other evaluations.

11. The Coordinator indicated that the 21st Meeting of the MCSD of June 2025 will discuss the details of the MSSD Final Evaluation Report, acknowledging that the Report has been elaborated by an independent evaluator and therefore related contents and conclusions cannot be changed as such, while the MCSD will decide which conclusions are to be considered for the update of the MSSD.

12. The Coordinator also stressed the need to discuss how the evaluation exercise should be implemented in the future, in order to be more inclusive and efficient.

Agenda item 4: Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period

13. Ms. Leïla Chikhaoui Mahdaoui, Former Minister for the Environment of Tunisia, opened the Agenda Point 4, presenting the national perspectives, policies and strategies to advance sustainable development in Tunisia. The MCSD Meeting thanked Ms. Leïla Chikhaoui Mahdaoui for the resourceful and extensive presentation and convened that Tunisia represents a good example to be shared and potentially replicated.

14. The Coordinator anticipated that the next Meeting of the MCSD might be postponed to 24-26 June, instead of 17-19 June as initially planned, given that the UNOC-3 will take place the week before, on 9-13 June in Nice. She added that precise dates and place of the 21st Meeting of the MCSD will be confirmed in upcoming weeks.

15. The Coordinator presented the updated text of the MSSD, which was shown on the screen, and the Members of the MCSD commented on the text. The overall comments and proposals of the Thematic Ad-Hoc Meeting of the MCSD are summarized below, while the updated text of the MSSD is enclosed as Annex III to this Report, reflecting the discussion.

16. Furthermore, during the Meeting, the Secretariat shared a Conference Room Paper (UNEP/MED WG.600/CRP.1) on additional descriptive elements of the MSSD Section *'Introduction and Background'*, which are highlighted in blue in Annex III, for easier reference.

17. On the MSSD Section *'Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025: Objectives, Strategic Directions and Actions'*, the Secretariat made the following proposals that were accepted:

- Climate Change to become Objective 1 of the updated MSSD
- The titles of the Objectives have to maintain to the extent possible their generic nature, in order not to imply potential exclusions in terms of issues to tackle, or/and stakeholders as well as processes.

18. The overall comments of the Members of the MCSD tacked the following elements:

- Section *'Introduction and Background'*
  - Paragraph 15 be deleted as outdated
  - Paragraphs 17 and 19 to be merged/summarized
  - Paragraph 20 to be further developed based on the conclusions steaming from the MSSD Final Evaluation
- Section on *'Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2035: Objectives, Strategic Directions and Actions'*
  - Greece made some suggestions for minor updates of the wording of the six objectives of the MSSD in order to better capture recent emerging priorities and challenges for the region including the need to increase resilience and adaption capacities, to promote circular economy and sustainable financing, which have been included in the attached updated MSSD document.
  - Greece, COMPSUD, Eco Union and GWP-Med sent updated proposals in writing during the Meeting, as requested by the Secretariat, in particular related to the list of issues addressed by the six objectives of the MSSD and on the titles of the Strategic Directions of Objective 5, "T*ransition towards a green and blue economy*".
  - On Targets, the Meeting commented that it would be ideal to aim at 15 targets maximum, that should be taken from existing relevant current global and regional commitments/frameworks, adapted to the Mediterranean region if possible. It was agreed that a target on renewable energies shall equally be introduced while the Secretariat will coordinate with GFCM on targets under Objective 1. Targets shall be better linked to MSSD dashboard of indicators, while verifying the work on analysis and statistics of UN DESA (Department of Economic and Social Affairs).
- Section on the *Tables of Strategic Directions, Actions, flagship initiatives and indicators*
  - The current MSSD includes more than 130 implementation indicators which are associated to each MSSD action. The experience up-to-now has showed that the Secretariat and the Contracting Parties do not have the capacities to follow up all these indicators, therefore it might be appropriate to have indicators at higher level, that might not necessarily be linked to each individual actions but rather aggregated at MSSD operational objectives/targets/SDGs level. It might be envisaged to have 3 to 4 indicators per MSSD Objective, linked, as appropriate, to the updated Targets. There was general agreement that the indicators are to be defined based on updated targets.
  - There were no major comments on the update of the actions included under the Six MSSD Objectives, while on new actions of green finance under the Objective 5, Plan Bleu/RAC specified that the foreseen guidelines/taxonomy for sustainable investments will provide indications at regional level that Countries have to develop into actions at national level and based on own specificities, with reference for example to carbon pricing, green taxes/revenues, etc.

- Section on '*Implementation and monitoring* of the *Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development'*

  - To consider the triennial workplan for MSSD implementation. The Secretariat expressed concerns about the added value of this proposal pointing out that the modality of a multiannual workplan was used in the past but replaced since the adoption of the first MSSD with its table of actions. One member of the MCSD also agreed that having a triennial workplan was not considered efficient in practice as such a cycle does not coincide with the MCSD biennial Meetings cycle nor with the Agenda 2030 and MSSD timeline.
  - Paragraph 180 to be updated by deleting the reference to the Officers of the Secretariat.
  - Under Action 7.1.4 add a reference to the development of a communication strategy.
  - Under Action 7.3.3 add a reference to mapping funding opportunities and develop a MSSD funding strategy.

19. Plan Bleu/RAC introduced the proposal on MSSD core indicators (UNEP/MED WG. 600/Inf.4) whose aim is to provide a more in-depth analysis on some key issues and with the objective to communicate key figures at regional level, such as the sea temperature increase and climate change adaptation as one of the main factors affecting sustainable development in the Mediterranean. It was added that the limited number of core indicators can be used to support MSSD outreach activities towards policy makers and broader stakeholders, by providing an easy path to grasp a picture of the main aspects, challenges and opportunities of sustainable development. One MCSD Member asked to receive the methodological factsheet for the definition and measurement of the core indicators, and, also, suggested to consider adding an extra indicator, adequately formulated, on energy consumption, energy intensity (total or per key sector) and penetration of RES in total energy consumption and in power generation, as a key issue that reflects the potential and challenges in the region

20. The eleven new MSSD flagship initiatives (UNEP/MED WG.600/5) were briefly presented by the leading MCSD Members, RACs and the Secretariat. The Meeting well received the new flagship initiatives, while the President of the MCSD specified that the flagship initiatives are not compulsory but rather opportunities for the MCSD Members and stakeholders to cooperate on topics of interest, support funds identifications, and potential replication at national level.

21. One Member of the MCSD highlighted the interest of her country in the new flagship initiatives on Protection and restoration of Seagrass/Posidonia Meadows as crucial ecosystems; Towards a Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Blue Tourism in the Mediterranean; Mediterranean Network of Zero Net Cities.

22. One Member of the MCSD asked that the Strategy for the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus (WEFE Nexus) is presented for validation at the 21st Meeting of the MCSD and to COP 24 for endorsement, with a mandate to prepare the related Action Plan.

23. On the new flagship initiative on Youth involvement in the MCSD and MSSD implementation, one Member of the MCSD highlighted that discussion on youth involvement started at COP 21 held in Naples in December 2019, thus the relevant new flagship should be updated accordingly. Furthermore, regarding the identified potential partners, INFO/RAC should also be included, as it is one of the regional centers actively engaged in involving youth in the Barcelona Convention.

24. The Secretariat specified that the implication, engagement and leadership of MCSD Members in new flagship initiatives is crucial, as the flagship initiatives demonstrate the delivery of the MSSD also at national level via replication actions. Some MCSD members also leading flagship initiatives stressed the need to secure funding and financial support at a more central level in order to promote their delivery.

25. It was also proposed to simplify the presentation of the new flagship initiatives by preparing a shorter document focusing on key objectives, key actions, partners and linkages with MSSD Objectives, targets and links to Barcelona Convention Protocols, when relevant, and to add this presentation as an Annex to the updated MSSD. The Secretariat will work on a proposal on how to integrate current and new flagship initiatives and d taking also into account current flagship initiatives that have not been launched yet.

26. The President of the MCSD suggested that the updated factsheet of the current flagship initiatives (UNEP/MED WG. 600/Inf.3) shall be published, with the support of INFO/RAC.

Agenda item 5: Elements for the updated 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF)

27. The MCSD welcomed the information document on the elements for the updated 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF) (UNEP/MED WG. 600/Inf.7) and highlighted its concrete elements for the update of the RCCAF and the good methodology followed with an independent assessment complemented by national inputs through a Questionnaire.

28. One MCSD member suggested that in order for the updated RCCAF to be relevant to countries, it should provide an overall assessment of adaptation challenges in the region and identification of hotspots; proposed governance and strategic approaches at the central government level in countries (e.g. key elements to be taken into account in drafting or revising NASs); list of proposed no-regret measures to climate-proof key economic sectors as tool boxes; provisions for the exchange of best practices and for enhancing data collection and predictions; as well as a follow-up and monitoring component.

29. The Coordinator recalled that the COP23 mandate is to update the current RCCAF, not to propose a radical change, adding that it should be discussed if a more concrete and detailed framework is needed to further support the Contracting Parties, taking into account the reports of MedECC that include a number of measures to tackle climate change.

30. It was agreed that the MCSD Members will provide comments in writing, trying also to benefit from relevant on-going work in the Region on the subject.

31. The Meeting asked to the Secretariat to send the updated MSSD for comments well in advance to allow time to undertake necessary consultation at national level.

Agenda item 6: Any Other Matters

32. The Meeting did not raise any AoB for consideration.

Agenda item 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

33. The Thematic ad hoc MCSD Meeting agreed that the MSSD document, as attached in Annex III, and incorporating the text amendments proposed by members and the UNEP/MAP Secretariat during the meeting, would be the basis for further work, based on discussions held at the Thematic ad hoc MCSD Meeting.

34. It was agreed to share the report of the Meeting as early as possible, preferably before mid-March 20025.

35. By the end of March 2025 at the latest, the Secretariat will send to the MCSD Members the updated MSSD, incorporating the work on targets and indicators, with a request for comments by mid-April 2025

36. The Secretariat committed to send the final version of the updated MSSD document in view of the 21st MCSD Meeting of June as early as possible to allow time for internal consultations at the national level for MCSD country members.

37. On the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF), a technical workshop may be organized in May/June 2025 to discuss in more detail the options and elements for its update

Agenda item 8: Closure of the Meeting

38. The Meeting was closed by the Chair of the MCSD at approximately 17:45 on Thursday, 13 February 2025.

Timetable

(The timetable is the local time of Istanbul, Time: GMT+3)

Wednesday, 12 February 2025		
Time	**Agenda item**	**Documents**
10:00 – 10:30	Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting	
10:30 – 10:45	Agenda item 2: Organizational Matters *a) Adoption of the Provisional Agenda* *b) Election of the Officers* *c) Organization of Work*	UNEP/MED WG.600/1 UNEP/MED WG.600/2/Rev.1 UNEP/MED WG.600/Inf.1/Rev.1 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.2
10:45- 13:00	Agenda item 3: Final Evaluation of the 2016-2025 Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)	UNEP/MED WG.600/3 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.3
13:00 – 14:30	*Lunch break*	
14:30 – 16:00	Agenda item 4: Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period	UNEP/MED WG.600/4 UNEP/MED WG.600/5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.3 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.4 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.6
16:00 – 16:30	*Break*	
16:30 – 17:30	Agenda item 4: Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period (Continuation)	UNEP/MED WG.600/4 UNEP/MED WG.600/5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.3 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.4 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.6

Thursday 13 February 2025		
Time	**Agenda item**	**Documents**
10:00 –11:30	Agenda item 4: Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period (Continuation)	UNEP/MED WG.600/4 UNEP/MED WG.600/5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.3 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.4 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.6
11:30 – 12:00	*Break*	
12:00 – 13:00	Agenda item 4: Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period (Continuation)	UNEP/MED WG.600/4 UNEP/MED WG.600/5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.3 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.4 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.5 UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.6
13:00 – 14:30	*Lunch break*	
14:30 – 17:00	Agenda item 5: Elements for the updated 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF)	UNEP/MED WG. 600//Inf.7
17:00 – 17:15	Agenda item 6: Any Other Matters	
17:15 – 18:00	Agenda item 7: Conclusions and Recommendations	
18:00	Agenda item 8: Closure of the Meeting	

Annex I

List of Participants

Thematic Ad-Hoc Meeting of the MCSD **12-13 February 2025, Istanbul, Türkiye**	
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Annex II

Agenda of the Thematic Ad-Hoc Meeting of the MCSD

Provisional Agenda

Agenda item 1 **Opening of the Meeting**

Agenda item 2 **Organizational Matters**

a) Adoption of the Provisional Agenda

b) Election of Officers

c) Organization of Work

Agenda item 3 **Final evaluation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD)**

Agenda item 4 **Updated MSSD for 2026-2035 period**

Agenda item 5 **Elements for the updated 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF)**

Agenda item 6 **Any Other Matters**

Agenda item 7 **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Agenda item 8 **Closure of the Meeting**

Annex III

Updated MSSD Document

Annex IV

Welcome Speeches and Opening Remarks/ Statements

Speech of Mr. Fatih Turan, General Director of the Environmental Management

Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change of Turkiye

Honorable President,

Head of OECD Istanbul Center,
Coordinator of UNEP/MAP and
Esteemed Members of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development,

It is a great pleasure to come together and welcome you all in our ancient city of Istanbul, a meeting point of continents and civilizations. Once again, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to each of you. Additionally, I am pleased to express my gratitude to the Government of France for its contributions and to the OECD for hosting this important meeting.

I hope that this meeting, which has brought us together today, will enhance regional cooperation in the coming period and contribute to our common goals for the Mediterranean.

Since 1995, we have been carrying out studies for sustainable development with the participation of the Contracting Parties, institutions, and organizations working for the Mediterranean, academics, and non-governmental organizations. Especially in recent years, within the scope of environmental developments worldwide, the Commission has made significant contributions to determining the steps and strategies to be taken in the Mediterranean.

During this two-day meeting, discussions will be held on the current progress and updates of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) and the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework (RCCAF), which I believe will contribute to shaping the future of our Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean is a region rich in biodiversity, yet at the same time, it is one of the most vulnerable ecosystems, particularly concerning climate change. It is also home to millions of people and hosts intense economic activities. According to studies, by 2050, the Mediterranean coasts will face threats such as increasing waste and decreasing water resources due to rising population, climate-induced migrations, and a significant increase in energy demand.

Climate change is severely impacting the Mediterranean’s seas and coasts. As air temperatures rise, extreme heat events are becoming more frequent. This situation poses significant risks to sectors such as tourism, agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture. Additionally, rising sea levels lead to floods and coastal erosion.

All these threats demonstrate that joint efforts are inevitable for achieving a sustainable and climate-resilient future in the Mediterranean. The decisions we make in this meeting today will be a critical turning point for the Mediterranean's climate adaptation and sustainable development goals.

In this context, one of the most important decisions of the Portoroz Ministerial Declaration is the establishment of a new Regional Climate Change Action Centre (CC/RAC) in the Mediterranean. This center will play a central role in key areas such as climate change adaptation, policy development, and

enhancing the capacity of local governments. The guidance provided by CC/RAC will serve as an essential support mechanism in strengthening climate resilience and implementing sustainable solutions in Mediterranean countries.

Türkiye has completed its efforts in large-scale plans such as the "National Circular Economy Strategy and Action Plan," the Green Deal Action Plan, and the 12th Development Plan. Additionally, Türkiye has long demonstrated its commitment to sustainability through the Zero Waste approach, which it has developed and implemented at the national level and is working to promote internationally. We intend to enhance and expand all our efforts both at the national level and through international cooperation for the future of the Mediterranean.

Moreover, the Istanbul Environmentally Friendly Cities Award, which will be presented for the fifth time this year is a significant initiative that encourages sustainable urbanization along the Mediterranean coasts. This initiative highlights the sustainable efforts of cities in areas such as climate change mitigation, conservation of natural ecosystems, efficient resource use, urban resilience, transportation, waste management, and water and energy efficiency.

The award is not only a recognition mechanism for Mediterranean cities but also a powerful tool that encourages city administrations to take concrete steps toward sustainable development goals. Thanks to Türkiye's financial support and the promotional and awareness-raising efforts of the Secretariat and INFO/RAC, the award has received great interest and is expected to have an even broader impact in the future.

Mr. President and Distinguished Participants,

As the Parties to the Mediterranean Action Plan, we must enhance our collective efforts for the Mediterranean and prioritize our works for a livable Mediterranean.

As Mediterranean countries, we continue to set an example for other regional conventions in various areas. In this regard, we must promote green transformation and circular economy approaches in the Mediterranean basin. These approaches prioritize the efficient and sustainable use of limited resources, and we should implement successful practices across the basin.

Additionally, we must collaborate to effectively and successfully implement the Blue Economy in the Mediterranean, which will ensure the efficient and sustainable use of marine resources.

Throughout these two-day meetings in Istanbul, where we will discuss the strategies and approaches to be pursued over the next decade for the Mediterranean, I extend my gratitude to all participants who have contributed and supported this process.

With the hope of coming together again in times when we can achieve our shared goal of a Mediterranean full of joy and prosperity through collective efforts,

Wishing you enjoyable moments in Istanbul, the pearl of the Bosphorus and the city of dreams,

I extend my respectful greetings to you all.

I wish you success.

Speech of Ms Damla H Dabak

Policy Analyst, OECD Istanbul Centre

Ladies and gentlemen,

Esteemed participants,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to the OECD Istanbul Centre today for the **Ad hoc Thematic Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD).** We are delighted to provide a platform for this important gathering, which will not only review past achievements but also update the **Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) for 2026-2035**—a crucial period for advancing our global goals amid both challenges and opportunities.

Since our establishment three years ago, we have hosted over 30 events, bringing together more than 3,000 stakeholders, including representatives from international organizations, UN bodies, government officials, and leading experts. As a key policy dialogue platform and regional hub, we play a strategic role in extending the OECD's global outreach, **with a strong focus on the Mediterranean region**. Given Istanbul's unique geopolitical and economic position, we are truly at the heart of the Mediterranean—facilitating knowledge exchange, fostering collaboration, and shaping policy discussions that will help define the future of the region.

At the Centre, our work is deeply rooted in core priorities as:

- Climate action
- Connectivity and infrastructure
- Gender equality
- Business climate
- Private sector development

However, as we advance in these areas, we increasingly recognize the need to address cross-cutting issues. Climate change directly affects transport and infrastructure resilience, while the way we design infrastructure plays a crucial role in achieving climate goals. At the same time, integrating gender considerations into policies is essential for fostering inclusive growth and sustainability. A key example of our efforts in this regard is the **Union for the Mediterranean Regional Integration Report**, where we explored the intersection of transport, climate, and gender—along with the critical role of finance—underscoring the importance of regional cooperation in addressing these challenges.

Our engagement in climate and environmental sustainability has grown stronger. We have hosted a series of high-level events to foster dialogue and advance global climate commitments:

In October last year, together with the UNDP Regional Hub, we host the **'Investing in Inclusive Climate Action'** as a cross-regional dialogue. Over 250 experts from Eurasia, SEE, LAC, MENA, and SASEA regions gathered to discuss how to make climate action more gender responsive. The event's outcome document aimed at shaping policies that integrate gender considerations into climate investments and were presented at COP 29 in Azerbaijan.

Again, with the UNDP Regional Hub, we held the **'Regional Conference on Scaling-Up Climate Action and Finance'** that provided a platform to advance climate finance frameworks in Europe and

the CIS region, gathering 70 high-level participants from 13 countries to discuss strategies ahead of COP29 in Azerbaijan.

In collaboration with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), we held the first **ever 'Mediterranean Green Week'** last May, bringing together policymakers, businesses, and civil society to discuss the 2030 Agenda for a Greener Mediterranean and the UfM Climate Action Plan.

'Decarbonising Transport in Emerging Economies : Policy Dialogue in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region' was another key event hosted at the Centre in June last year in partnership with the International Transport Forum (ITF). The discussions focused on aligning regional transport policies with global decarbonisation goals.

We also supported flagship OECD projects such as the **Green Action Task Force, Sustainable Infrastructure Programme in Asia and Supporting Green Transition through Circular Economy roadmaps for Western Balkans**.

We extend beyond our geographical vicinity too. One recent example is the **Circular Economy and Social Cohesion** side event we co-hosted in Colombia in October, as part of the 3rd OECD LACRP Ministerial Summit on Social Inclusion. The discussions focused on how circular economy policies can drive social inclusion, bringing together government officials, experts, and civil society representatives.

As you may notice from the breadth and depth of these events, we run an ambitious programme and deeply appreciate the value of partnerships and collective actions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The challenges we face today—climate change, environmental sustainability, and inclusive development—demand collective action, cross-sector collaboration, and bold policy solutions. The OECD has a strong foundation of policy tools and frameworks that can support UNEP MAP's objectives, particularly in the areas of finance and investment, which are essential for achieving climate goals in the Mediterranean region.

There is immense value in deepening our collaboration and amplifying our collective voice. By working together, we can develop innovative solutions, mobilize resources more effectively, and drive meaningful change for the region's sustainable future.

Through the OECD Istanbul Centre, we remain committed to fostering knowledge exchange, building strategic partnerships, and facilitating impactful policy discussions.

We look forward to today's discussions and to shaping the future together.

Thank you.

Opening remarks by Ms. Tatjana Hema, Coordinator

UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat

Distinguished Members of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development,

Distinguished Delegates,

Dear Colleagues,

- On behalf of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP)-Barcelona Convention Secretariat, I wish to thank you for being with us for these two important days of work
- I also wish to express my gratitude to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Istanbul Centre that kindly offered to host Thematic Ad-Hoc Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development in beautiful Istanbul
- We met last time in June 2023 in Marseille in the occasion of the 20th meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development where it was decided to update the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, with the dedicated support of the Extended Steering Committee of the MCSD, and taking into account the most recent global and regional commitments and cooperation frameworks, as well as potential thematic and systemic gaps
- The Strategy in fact confirms being a relevant and sound framework of cooperation for the Region that does not need a deep revision but rather an alignment with most recent development and opportunities for cooperation
- Since the last meeting of the MCSD in June 2023, important concrete progress has been made, under the committed Presidency and lead of France which I would also like to thank also for the financial voluntary contribution provided to support, among the other actions, the numerous meetings dedicated to the MSSD update
- Since October 2023, 5 Extended Steering Committee meetings have been held, one MCSD Steering Committee, 3 Working Groups for the MSSD Revision on Marine Spatial Planning, Circular Economy and Sustainable Finance have been launched and are still working, the MSSD Final Evaluation has been delivered, and the Secretariat has promoted the update of the MSSD in a number of high-level regional events, as for instance the Mediterranean Green Week, the UfM Platforms on Environment and Climate Change and the 2024 Our Ocean Conference
- The documents that we will discuss today represent the outcome of all this work and allow me to thank the MCSD Members that volunteered also as Members of the Extended Steering Committee of the MCSD, as well as the RACs for their contribution, in particular PAP/RAC, Plan Bleu and SCP/RAC-MedWaves for coordinating the 3 Working Groups for the MSSD Revision
- Dear Colleagues, the work is in progress, and your contribution during the two days of work is crucial in order to further progress in defining an updated MSSD that will cover the next period 2026-2035 and that effectively reflects the mandate of the COP23 for a swift update of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development in order to effectively implement Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and its SDGs at the regional level, seeking to amend current unsustainable trajectories and place the region on alternative pathways to sustainability and resilience
- The update of the MSSD is a unique opportunity to upscale the green transition and climate resilience of the region, to promote the multi-use of the Mediterranean sea and coasts, thus further promoting sustainable blue economy as key economic sector, to ensure circular and regenerative use conservation of Biodiversity and Natural Resources, including water and forests, to promote nature based solutions, to embed in the MSSD the green sustainable finance and therefore pursuit

investment paths that reinforce sustainable business models and circular economy, while further supporting sub-national and local authorities as active actors especially within the urban dimension, and better involve youth, women, private sector and investors

- In this context, the MSSD flagship initiatives should be considered as a key enabler for the MSSD effective implementation and impact, both at national and regional level, and should be upscaled in the framework of the updated MSSD.
- The MSSD flagship initiatives should represent the Strategy in an exemplary way, proposing demonstrative actions with significant potential for engagement, progressively supporting stakeholders and institutional commitment as well as visibility, therefore increasing the outreach and attractiveness to the Strategy, also in terms of financial support
- This is the reason why I have called this Thematic Ad-Hoc MCSC meeting before the regular MCSD meeting of June, as we must seize a unique chance to reflect and discuss actions and trajectories that prioritize sustainable economic opportunity, poverty reduction, healthy Mediterranean sea and coasts and climate resilience at once. This is not only crucial; it is within the region's reach as path to achieve SDGs in our region!
- This in a nutshell is the substance of the proposed updated elements of the MSSD, while the 2015 UN Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), the European Green Deal, 2024 UN Resolution on the Pact for the Future, the 2022 UNGA Resolution, "Our Ocean, Our Future, Our Responsibility", the 2024 UNEA 6 Res.15 on Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution represent the reference policy frameworks, together with the Post-2020 SAPBIO and other UNEP/MAP recently adopted policies, including Programmes of Measures to achieve Good Environmental Status of Mediterranean Sea and Coast
- Dear Colleagues, let me bring to your attention also on the update of the 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework
- As the most recent MedECC reports and Sixth Assessment Report have highlighted, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, if global warming exceeds 1.5 to 2°C above the pre-industrial level, in the coming decades the impact of climate change is projected to be importantly exacerbated, and the region is expected to remain among the regions most affected by climate change at global level!
- Significantly enhanced efforts and actions are needed in order to adapt to inevitable changes, mitigate change drivers and increase resilience!
- As for the MSSD whose objective 4 focuses Climate Change, the update of the 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework must contribute to these enhanced efforts! Therefore, I count on your contribution also to this discussion
- Finally, Colleagues, let me highlight that this year coincides with the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Barcelona Convention and the 30th Anniversary of the Mediterranean Commission on the Sustainable Development

- 2025 and COP24 represent thus a landmark moment for the MAP System and the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development
- We have recently launched the Odyssey Reloaded, a dedicated campaign on the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of UNEP/MAP and Secretariat has been working with France, as host-country of the 2025 UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-3) on a High-Level event during the Mediterranean Day at UNOC-3, on 10 June, and under your guidance the MSSD for the next period 2026-2035 shall be one of the key milestones of the upcoming COP24!
- We are committed, now more than ever, to fulfill the MSSD vision that guides us towards sustainable prosperity, healthy ecosystems and climate resilience in our Mediterranean region

- I count on this thematic ad hoc MCSD to be a meeting of delivery also in view of the 21st MCSD meeting in June, and I invite all MSCD Members to continue to be more than ever an active part of the MAP-Barcelona Convention system's response to sustainable development challenges and opportunities for implementing our common agenda on SDGs in the region.
- Best wishes for a fruitful and successful meeting! Thank you

Speech of Hon. Pedro Roque (Portugal)

PAM Vice President and President of the 3rd Standing Committee

Excellencies, Dear colleagues and Honorable Guests,

It is a great honour for me to address the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development and to represent the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean – a full-fledged member of this important Commission.

Let me begin by recalling that the Barcelona Convention constitutes the principal regional legally binding Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) in the Mediterranean and the epitome of international law promoting multilateralism and environmental sustainability.

In this context, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (**MSSD) stands out as a critical tool** for addressing the region's unique challenges: as you know, the Mediterranean is a "Climate Change Hotspot", a "Global Biodiversity Hotspot" and the second-fastest warming region of the world.

We welcome the outcomes of the final evaluation of the MSSD and are pleased to see the notable progress achieved.

However, the strategy needs to be strengthened in terms of action planning, and by using more preventive, synergetic and inclusive approaches.

The monitoring process is well set and provides a broad range of indicators which play an important role in measuring the progress made by CPs towards the SDGs.

Nonetheless, we fully concur with the conclusions of the final evaluation: the number of indicators should be balanced between the different MSSD objectives and be more specific while refining the strategy to be more streamlined and results-oriented would help minimize redundancy and avoid fragmentation into isolated sectoral objectives.

To this end, the role of parliaments and dialogue among them is essential in this process: PAM strongly promotes the tools of interparliamentary diplomacy and enhanced regional cooperation and fosters an environment that encourages concrete legislative actions within a common legislative framework.

We have already taken important steps towards this end: we joined forces with the UNEP/MAP to produce the "Parliamentarian's guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast".

The guide highlights the value of the Barcelona Convention's provisions, and Sen. Petrucci, PAM Rapporteur on Environment, has specifically recalled the importance of their implementation in her report on environment to be presented at the 19th Plenary Session of PAM in Rome.

Nevertheless, we recognize that visibility needs to be systematically ensured beyond the UNEP/MAP system, in order to progressively engage with more and more stakeholders and mobilize actors, particularly at the national level of CPs.

To this end, a more effective participatory process of stakeholders must be at the core of this strategy.

The third edition of the Economic Parliamentary Forum of Marrakesh, which PAM will host on 9-10 May, is a unique opportunity to increase visibility beyond the UNEP/MAP system, serving as a platform to engage in dialogue among 34 member states and partners, private sector, academia, IOs.

Last but not least, at the next PAM Plenary Session in Rome, delegates will discuss a proposal made by the PAM Rapporteur on the right to water on the utility to recognize the legal personality of the Mediterranean Sea. This aims at seeking to redefine the Mediterranean Sea as a legal entity capable of having subjective rights and legal obligations, to protect it from illegal and harmful activities.

The proposal represents a significant step towards protecting ecosystems, aligning with the principles of the Barcelona Convention, with the aim of preventing, reducing, and combating pollution in the Mediterranean Sea while preserving its marine environment.

Dear Colleagues,

In conclusion, we reiterate our total and unconditional support to the Barcelona Convention system, to the Commission and its strategy, united in our collective commitment to safeguarding and protecting the Mediterranean.

Thank you all very much.