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Agenda Item 3: Report by the Coordinator on Sustainable Development Activities for the Period June 2023 – May 2025

Progress Report for the Period June 2023 – May 2025

Note by the Secretariat

The present document provides information on the work done by the Members of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), UNEP/MAP Secretariat and Regional Activity Centers (RACs) after the 20th Meeting of the MCSD in the period June 2023– May 2025, and in line with the UNEP/MAP 2024-2025 Programme of Work and Budget (PoW).

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Progress Report and Specific Issues

Sustainable Development Activities for the Period June 2023 – May 2025

1. The second semester of 2023 was marked by the preparation of the 23rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and its Protocols (COP 23) that was successfully held on 5-8 December 2023 in Portoroz, Slovenia. COP23 was attended by 19 Contracting Parties and more than 30 representatives of United Nations specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other entities; the Secretariat received important signals of commitment and support from the stakeholders.
2. The information document, UNEP/MED IG.26/Inf.13 “Contribution of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development to the Portorož Ministerial Declaration”, was submitted within the COP23 documents package.
3. With the Portorož Ministerial Declaration, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, vowed to undertake the required radical shifts to decouple economic progress from the drivers of environmental degradation, and to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Mediterranean region.
4. H.E. Robert Golob, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, opened the COP23 Ministerial Session on 7 December, highlighting nature conservation in the Mediterranean as a priority for the Slovenian Presidency of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols during the 2024-2025 biennium.
5. Specifically, the Portorož Ministerial Declaration highlights the following points of specific interest for the MCSD:
 - i. further promote sustainable development, considering the priorities discussed at the 20th session of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development
 - ii. intensify activities at all levels, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) being at the midpoint to 2030, and to this end, commit to a swift update of the 2016-2025 Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)
 - iii. commit to raise the level of ambition and implement targeted actions to accelerate progress towards achieving Good Environmental Status and Sustainable Development Goals
 - iv. take in due consideration the gender perspective and invest in future generations
 - v. commit to advance decarbonization, including in the blue economy sectors, while also recognizing the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus as an important approach
6. In addition, several major COP 23 Decisions are relevant to the work of the MCSD and its Steering Committee (SC). The Report of the COP 23 (Reference Document UNEP/MED IG.26/22) includes, among other, the following decisions, which are of particular interest for the work of the MCSD and its SC and that were taken in due account for the MSSD and 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework (RCCAF) update as needed be:
 - i. Decision IG.26/10 - Conceptual Framework for Implementing Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Mediterranean
 - ii. Decision IG.26/13 -Assessment Studies: Summary for Policymakers of the MedECC Special Report on Climate and Environmental Coastal Risks
 - iii. Decision IG.26/12 - Establishment of a Regional Activity Centre on Climate Change
7. The period October 2023 – May 2025 was also marked by the implementation of the activities and meetings related to the update of the 2026-2035 MSSD and of the 2016 Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework (RCCAF).

8. During this reporting period, following the decisions of the 20th Meeting of the MCSD, the extended SC of the MCSD was established and with specific tasks linked to the support the MSSD revision process. In addition to the formal MCSD SC Members, the following members volunteered: representatives of Croatia, Israel, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, Spain, Türkiye as Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, as well as the Global Water Partnership (GWP), ECOUNION and the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), respectively as representatives of Intergovernmental Organizations Group, Socio-Economic Stakeholders Group and former MCSD Members. From October 2023 until December 2024 five meetings of the extended MCSD SC took place, both on-line and in person.

9. The 25th meeting of the MCSD SC took place in Athens on 18-19 April 2024 with the main objectives to review the progress of the activities related to sustainable development of the MSSD and its Flagship Initiatives since the 24th Meeting of the MCSD SC (Athens, 14-15 December 2022). The MCSD SC also reviewed and validated the proposal of the Secretariat on the approach, objectives and tasks of the MSSD final evaluation as well as the directions, process and timeline for the MSSD update, and agreed to set up three thematic Working Groups (WGs) to support the MSSD update, namely on Marine Spatial Planning, Circular Economy and Ocean Economy/Sustainable Finance, and under the coordination of relevant RACs: SCP/RAC-MedWaves for the WG on Circular Economy, PAP/RAC for the WG on Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Plan Blue for the WG on Ocean Economy/Sustainable Finance.

10. On 12 July 2024 an online introductory meeting was organized by the Secretariat for all WGs' members. Nine MSSD update WGs meetings took place between October 2024 and March 2025. The main conclusion of the WGs meetings have been integrated in the updated MSSD version, presented to the 21st MCSD meeting as working document UNEP/MED WG.625/5), while the reports of the WGs meetings are reported in the Info document UNEP/MED WG.625/Inf.8

11. In particular the MSP WG has a continuous role, also beyond the MSSD update and in the framework of the implementation of the Decision IG.26/10 on the Conceptual Framework for Implementing Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean, while the continuation of the WG Ocean Economy/Sustainable Finance is proposed in the PoW 2026-2027.

12. On 12-13 February 2025 the Thematic Ad Hoc MCSD meeting took place in Istanbul, Türkiye at the kind invitation of the OECE Regional Istanbul Office with the specific objective to discuss the first draft of the updated MSSD text, including the new flagship initiatives and the updated 2016 RCCAF. In mid-April an advance version of the MSSD has been circulated to the MCSD Members for consultation purposes and ahead of the 21st MCSD meeting..

13. Further information on the MSSD revision process, including the meetings of the extended SC MCSD is provided as Annex I of this report.

14. Based on the recommendations of the 25th MCSD SC meeting that highlighted the usefulness of the information factsheets of the current MSSD flagship initiatives in terms of enhanced visibility and outreach of the MSSD, in the period June-November 2024 the Secretariat, in coordination with the Lead Institutions of the flagship initiatives, updated the existing factsheets (UNEP/MED WG.600/Inf.3).

15. In early 2020, Plan Bleu/RAC launched its third foresight exercise, MED 2050. Since then, a number of steps have been taken and the report has been completed in 2025 following wide-ranging discussion involving all the shores of the Mediterranean. The report "The Mediterranean by 2050: A Foresight by Plan Bleu" (MED2050 Report)¹ presents the results of the first three phases of this collaborative foresight exercise (1. Foresight Base; 2. Visions; 3. Scenarios), which led to the production of six scenarios for the Mediterranean by 2050. The study therefore marks a milestone in understanding the sustainable development issues in the Mediterranean region and offers future perspectives for the next thirty years, aiming to support the Mediterranean countries to develop and implement effective transitional pathways to promote the best scenario for them and the region.

¹ <https://planbleu.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/MED-2050-REPORT-EN.pdf>

16. Supported also by the kind voluntary contribution of France, Plan Bleu/RAC has also finalised the Report on Environmentally Harmful Subsidies (EHS)² which provides an in-depth analysis and tailored recommendations relevant to the diverse contexts and legislative frameworks across the region, suggesting practical pathways for reform primarily in relation to energy and fisheries related subsidies, as well as to water and tourism related subsidies. This is the first report to address the issue of EHS for the Mediterranean, making it a pioneering effort in regional environmental policy. The report aligns with global efforts, such as those led by the OECD and UNEP work on reforming harmful subsidies, while it serves also as evidence for the revision of the MSSD. A second report is expected by the end of 2025, which will focus on Environmentally Virtuous Economic Tools and Finances.

17. In this reporting period the Secretariat participated in a number of regional events of regional/sub-regional programmes, initiatives and strategies, as detailed under the section on Outreach, Communication and Advocacy.

18. Particular attention is given by the Secretariat to strengthen collaboration with the EU and its institutions to maximize synergies on topics addressed by the MSSD and in order to upscale and accelerate the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Mediterranean in synergy with their relevant regional efforts. This also in the light of the 2024 renewed College of EU Commissioners, in particular of the new Commissioner for Mediterranean and the new Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, as well as the reorganization of the former Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) into of the new Directorate-Generals for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA)³ and Directorate-General for Enlargement and the Eastern Neighborhood (DG ENEST)⁴.

19. In addition, the Secretariat has been in contact with the Directorate General for Regional and Urban policies (DG REGIO) and with the Intermediterranean Commission of the Conference of the Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)⁵ in order to follow the developments for the potential establishment of the Mediterranean Macro Regional Strategy⁶ highlighting MSSD as a collaborative regional framework for sustainable development with its flagship initiatives. Accordingly, the Secretariat has provided substantial input to the draft action plan of the macro-regional strategy for the Mediterranean.

20. The total voluntary contribution of 2.4 million EUR of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France was instrumental to deliver activities of the UNEP/MAP PoW 2024-2025, including MSSD update and MCSD meetings and other related core work.

21. More information on actions undertaken by MCSD Members and UNEP/MAP Components are presented in detail in the information document UNEP/MED WG.625/Inf.3.

Implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)

I. MSSD Flagship Initiatives

22. The 20th Meeting of the MCSD (14-16 June 2023, Marseille, France) and the 25th MCSD SC Meeting (18-19 April 2024, Athens, Greece) welcomed the presentations of the activities undertaken by MCSD Members and Observers, partners and the Secretariat under the MSSD Flagship Initiatives, noting with appreciation the advanced status of implementation of all initiatives except for one, and acknowledged the efforts in support to the promotion of the MSSD Flagship Initiatives, encouraging to pursue such communication and capitalization actions.

² <https://planbleu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/EHS-Report.pdf>

³ [Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf - European Commission](#)

⁴ [Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood - European Commission](#)

⁵ [CPMR – Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions](#)

⁶ [Working towards a macro-regional strategy in the Mediterranean \(europa.eu\)](#)

23. In particular during the reporting period June 2023-May 2025, 10 MSSD Flagship Initiatives have been advancing quite steadily:

- i. Support the Trust Fund for Mediterranean marine protected areas (Med Fund)
- ii. Promote the “Green list” (IUCN World Parks Congress) in riparian states to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of parks managing bodies
- iii. Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award (IEFCA)
- iv. Create a sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean, with a view to planning cities that will work for everyone, in order to make them inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- v. Undertake regional assessments, as well as knowledge exchanges, of high- and low-tech solutions, that have been successfully implemented to achieve waste reduction
- vi. Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedEcc)
- vii. WeMed Green Business Award
- viii. Environmental Governance – Encourage the Accession to and Implementation of the Aarhus Convention on Public Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)
- ix. Develop capacity building programmes on issues related to implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements
- x. Establish a publicly accessible Mediterranean integrated information system through a triumvirate of national governments, international institutions and the private sector to collate and transparently display information on the state of the environment

24. The flagship initiative ‘Integrate sustainability principles into public procurement at national and local levels’ has not been launched yet.

25. The Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Action Plan towards 2030 has equally well advanced and is considered ‘*de facto*’ as MSSD flagship initiative. It is included in the proposed updated MSSD under Objective 6 on Governance, under the Strategic Direction 6.4- Promote education and research for sustainable development.

26. The table below summarizes the status of implementation of the MSSD Flagship Initiatives:

- in dark green: finalized
- in light green: advanced implementation
- in orange: on-going/not fully deployed
- in red: not yet launched
- in blue: ‘*de facto*’ MSSD flagship initiative

27. The following table summarizes advancement of the MSSD Flagship Initiatives while the details are provided in the information document UNEP/MED WG.625/Inf.3.

Current MSSD 2026-2025 Objective/Strategic Directions	MSSD Flagship Initiative	Leader/Partners and main developments
Objective 1, Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas Strategic Direction 1.1, Strengthen implementation of and compliance with the Protocols of the Barcelo Action 1.1.10	Support the Trust Fund for Mediterranean marine protected areas The MedFund https://themedfund.org/	Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, the Oceanographic Institute (Monaco), SPA/RAC, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, MedPAN, WWF Med, IUCN Med, Conservatoire du Littoral (France) and the Mediterranean Small Islands Initiative. To date, 2,7 million euros have been committed to support eight Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) covering over 3,000 km² in four Mediterranean countries: Karaburun Sazan MPA in Albania; Kuriat, Kneiss, Zembra and La Galite MPAs in Tunisia; Al Hoceima and Jbel Moussa MPAs in Morocco; and, Gokova Bay MPA in Türkiye. SPA/RAC will update the MedFund flagship initiative on toward the objective of achieving 30 by 30 MPAs/ OECMs Targets in the framework of the updated MSSD.
Objective 2, Promoting resource management, food production and food security through sustainable forms of rural development Strategic Direction 2.3, Promote networks of ecologically protected areas at national and Mediterranean level and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss Action 2.3.5.	Promote the “Green list” (IUCN World Parks Congress) in riparian states to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of parks managing bodies The Green List https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/our-work/iucn-green-list-protected-and-conserved-areas	IUCN (the Green List) through its Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation. Significant efforts have been undertaken to reinvigorate the Green List programme in North Africa. the Act30 project has been approved to support the implementation of the 30x30 commitments. An important global initiative for Green List has been financed worldwide and is funding a new Green List Coordinator full-time position at the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation. A regional Mediterranean Marine Green List Expert Assessment Group has been developed and will be operational in May 2025 to support the assessment of Marine sites in the Mediterranean area.
Objective 3, Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities Strategic direction 3.1, Apply holistic and integrated spatial planning processes and other related instruments, as well as improved compliance with	Promote the “Environment Friendly City” Award approved by COP18 (Istanbul Declaration, December 2013) Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award	UNEP/MAP in cooperation with MedCities, through the voluntary contributions from Türkiye, as per Decision IG.22/19 adopted at COP 19: https://www.unenvironment.org/unepmap/istanbul-environment-friendly-city-award

Current MSSD 2026-2025 Objective/Strategic Directions	MSSD Flagship Initiative	Leader/Partners and main developments
respective rules and regulations, to increase economic, social and territorial cohesion and reduce pressures on the environment Action 3.1.9		4 th Edition Implemented and Award celebrated at COP23 5 th Edition under implementation iefca INFO-RAC and to be celebrated at COP24
Objective 3 , Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities Strategic Direction 3.2 , Encourage inclusive urbanization and strengthen capacities for participatory and integrated human settlement planning and management Action 3.2.5	Create a sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean, with a view to planning cities that will work for everyone, in order to make them inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable MedUrbanTools www.medurbantools.com	Med Cities through MedUrbanTools: http://medurbantools.com/ The MedUrbanTools platform includes now more than 191 best practices, 132 videos of experts and 109 replicable tools on different topics concerning Mediterranean cities, including the experiences of 76 cities or metropolitan areas.
Objective 3 , Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities Strategic Direction 3.4 , Promote sustainable waste management within the context of a more circular economy Action 3.4.5	Undertake regional assessments , as well as knowledge exchanges, of high- and low-tech solutions, that have been successfully implemented to achieve waste reduction	Regional assessment and online repository launched in 2021 by MIO-ECSDE, COMPSUD and UfM through the EU funded WES Regional Project www.wes-med.eu A Guide for Decision-Makers in the Mediterranean has been produced by the Med4Waste ENI CBC Med project in English, French and Arabic. It has made a genuine effort to provide fit-for-purpose guidance for Mediterranean decision-makers, but also other stakeholders. Although the flagship initiative can be considered completed, it can be further enhanced and expanded.
Objective 4 , Addressing climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean Strategic Direction 4.1 , Increase scientific knowledge, raise awareness, and develop technical capacities to deal with climate change and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems Action 4.1.9.	Establish a regional science-policy interface mechanism, including the social and behavioral sciences, endorsed by all the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, with a view to preparing consolidated regional scientific assessments and guidance on climate change trends, impacts and adaptation and mitigation options Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change, MedECC https://www.medecc.org/	MedECC, UNEP/MAP and Plan Bleu, UfMS, Gov. of the Principality of Monaco, French Ministry for Ecological Transition, Generalitat de Catalunya (Spain), ADEME (France), Aix-Marseille University (France) and its Labex OT-MED, French National Institute of Research for Sustainable Development (IRD), MISTRALS Research Programme, Aix- Marseille Provence Metropole (France) COP 23 approved the Special Report on Climate and Environmental Coastal Risks (SR1) and its Summary for Policymakers (SPM), approved during the COP 23 and the commitment to support MedECC activities through the 2024-2025 Programme of Work (PoW) and budget.

Current MSSD 2026-2025 Objective/Strategic Directions	MSSD Flagship Initiative	Leader/Partners and main developments
		In the last quarter of 2024, a call was issued for the renewal of MedECC Steering Committee and Co-Coordinator positions. Preparation for the Second Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR2) began in February 2025, with a planned publication scheduled for 2028. MedECC, in collaboration with Plan Bleu, is exploring financial options through the European Commission, specifically the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement (DG NEAR).
Objective 5, Transition towards a green and blue economy Strategic Direction 5.4, Encourage environmentally-friendly and social innovation Action 5.4.5.	Create and promote a Mediterranean business award for environmental innovation WeMedAward	SCP/RAC through Decision IG.24/3 adopted at COP 21 with the support of the SwitchMed Programme. WeMed Mediterranean Sustainability Award: https://www.wemedaward.org/. The 2023 3rd edition of the WeMedAwards was assigned to young entrepreneurs from Lebanon, Tunisia, Spain and Italy. The 4th edition took place in June 2024 focusing on blue economy.
Objective 5, Transition towards a green and blue economy Strategic Direction 5.4, Ensure a greener and more inclusive market that integrates the true environmental and social cost of products and services to reduce social and environmental externalities Action 5.6.5.	Integrate sustainability principles into public procurement at national and local levels	Not yet launched
Objective 6, Improving governance in support of sustainable development Strategic Direction 6.2, Promote the engagement of civil society, scientists, local communities and other stakeholders in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive processes and integrity in decision-making Action 6.2.3.	Encourage the adoption and implementation of the Aarhus Convention on Public Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters	Activities launched in 2020 by MIO-ECSDE, COMPSUD and MEPIELAN through the EU LIFE Programme and further strengthened in 2021 through the EU-funded Water and Environment Support (WES) in the ENI Neighborhood South Region project: www.wes-med.eu Mediterranean Accession Agenda to the Aarhus Convention (MAAAC) finalized in November 2023. Foundation Discussion Document for the Mediterranean Accession Agenda to the Aarhus Convention published. A first ever regional training dedicated to the promotion of the Aarhus Convention in the whole of the Mediterranean was co-organized by the

Current MSSD 2026-2025 Objective/Strategic Directions	MSSD Flagship Initiative	Leader/Partners and main developments
		WES project and the UNECE Aarhus Convention Secretariat, in Athens, Greece, on 14-15 November 2023. The meeting of the Committee on Energy, Environment and Water of the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM, at its session of 15 February 2024 in Rabat, agreed to include in the Committee's recommendations a point calling on all the countries in the Mediterranean region to ratify the Aarhus Convention. The 28th Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (2-4 July 2024) acknowledged the efforts of the flagship initiative
Objective 6, Improving governance in support of sustainable development Strategic Direction 6.3, Promote implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements including through policy coherence based on inter-ministerial coordination Action 6.3.5	Develop capacity building programmes on issues related to implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements, including environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments.	MEPIELAN in the context of a specific agreement with the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat. The online Training School entitled “Sustainable Maritime Governance in the Mediterranean - Environmental Governance and Sustainability” took place on May 5-10 2025, in cooperation with UNEP/MAP and MAP Partner European Public Law Organization (EPLO). https://med-ecogov.education A second module is planned in October/November 2025.
Objective 6, Improving governance in support of sustainable development Strategic Direction 6.5, Enhance regional capabilities for information management Action 6.5.5.	Establish a publicly accessible Mediterranean integrated information system through a triumvirate of national governments, international institutions and the private sector to collate and transparently display information on the state of the environment	Plan Bleu through the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and the Regional Observatory on the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean http://obs.planbleu.org/en/
Included under the Objective 6 on Governance of the proposed updated MSSD.	Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Action Plan towards 2030	5 national ESD policy frameworks prepared and based on the MSED; 12 national and regional physical and online training sessions; 1700 administrators and educators engaged in interactive trainings; 19 countries have been technically supported in their efforts of promoting ESD in national contexts; 1 Flagship Project of UNESCO/GAP dedicated to the Action Plan of the MSED; a Ministerial Statement in the framework of the 2022 High-Level Event of Education and Environment Ministers on the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan towards 2030

II. Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard Indicators and Related Trends

28. Work on the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, including the Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) indicators, was presented during the 20th Meeting of the MCSD by Plan Bleu/RAC, and as joint work with SCP/RAC-MedWaves. The dashboard is now available, online, in the frame of a dedicated category on MapX cartographic application⁷.

29. Plan Bleu/RAC has reviewed the indicator factsheets linked to the Sustainable Development Goals as part of the periodic monitoring to follow the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD). Since 2023, a section is dedicated to the Mediterranean MSSD Dashboard on the World Environment Situation Room Data, Information and Knowledge on the Environment (WESR)⁸. It compiles all information produced by Plan Bleu for the MSSD monitoring in an interactive way. The MSSD dashboard benefits from the functionalities offered by the MAPx application, allowing users to interact with the data (statistics and geospatial) and to use tools to see the evolution of the indicators over time. To date, more than 40 geospatial and statistical data are visualizable on the observatory, coming from various data sources.

30. As part of the evaluation of the current MSSD, in June 2024, Plan Bleu/RAC developed a quantitative assessment report on the situation of sustainable development in the Mediterranean region using the 28 MSSD dashboard populated indicators and which was equally used for the MSSD final evaluation. The work is based on the monitoring and assessment of the MSSD dashboard and its compendium of 28 indicators over the last 10 years period (2015-2024). The June 2024 quantitative assessment report on the 28 MSSD dashboard is presented as reference document.

31. According to the assessment, the 28 MSSD indicators 18 % are stable, 61% show an improvement and 21 % show a decrease in terms of sustainable development and with reference to 2015 as baseline year.

32. Specifically, some highlights can be flagged with regards to the state of sustainable development in the Mediterranean basin over the period 2015-2024 and based on MSSD indicators:

- For some of the MSSD objectives, such as sanitation and access to electricity, the situation is improving, while for others such as climate change, energy intensity, water and sustainable tourism (particularly the environmental objectives), the situation is worsening
- Climate change is now confirmed as a key driver of environmental change in the region
- Sharp income disparities still exist among countries, and in some cases growth figures conceal deterioration in regenerative natural capital
- The economic growth in the Southern and Eastern countries was accompanied by significant improvements in key social indicators as represented by the Human Development Index
- Even if there is a lack of data for indicator 18 (Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements, or inadequate housing), within the region, poverty continues to affect many.

33. Plan Bleu/RAC also prepared in June 2024 an in-depth analysis with regards to the main difficulties and issues dealing with temporal and geographical coverage, access to/download the datasets, values, titles, changes in units, definitions and calculation methods for each of the 28 indicators of the MSSD dashboard. They are crucial points because they made, or not, possible the comparison and the evolution of the indicators over time and space. Many changes occurred during the past 10 years.

34. In complement, during the 25th MCSD Steering Committee (SC) meeting of 18-19 April 2024 (Athens, Greece), Plan Bleu/RAC presented a proposal for 7 core indicators, selected among the existing 28 MSSD indicators as per Decision IG.23/4 of COP 20, 17-20 December 2017 (Tirana, Albania), and that show the region's progress and challenges over the past three decades.

35. The aim of the core indicators 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

⁷ <https://wesr.unep.org/article/mediterranean-sea-unep-regional-sea>

⁸ <https://wesr.unep.org/article/dashboard>

climate change adaptation as one of the main factors affecting sustainable development in the Mediterranean. The core indicators therefore can 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.

36. The MCSD SC took note of the proposal and asked Plan Bleu/RAC to further elaborate, as far as possible, a proposal on core indicators including also possible new MSSD indicators on health and air quality, on adaptation to climate change, on marine and coastal environment.

37. The follow up proposal of Plan Bleu/RAC is related to 10 core indicators that complement the MSSD dashboard with more in-depth analysis. They have been shared with the online Extended SC of the MCSD of 12 November 2024 as well as information document of the Thematic Ad Hoc MCSD meeting of 12-13 February 2025 (Istanbul, Türkiye).

38. The following 7 indicators, which are already MSSD indicators, are to be proposed as MSSD core indicators with a deeper analysis:

- 1. Demography: a) number of inhabitants; b) share of youth and senior
- 2. Life expectancy at birth
- 3. Average years of schooling
- 4. Real GDP per capita
- 5. Territorial carbon dioxide emissions per capita
- 7. a) Water withdrawal per inhabitant; b. Renewable freshwater resources per capita
- 10. Evolution of protected marine areas (in number and area covered)

39. It is to be noted that the titles of the Indicator 5. Territorial carbon dioxide emissions per capita and of Indicator 10. Evolution of protected marine areas (in number and area covered), are to be proposed as slightly updated in order to be more precise in the analysis and better communicate the object of monitoring activities.

40. The following 3 indicators are to be proposed as new MSSD indicators and to be considered also as core indicators:

- 6. Surface temperature: a) Atmospheric; b) Sea surface temperature
- 8. Plastic leakages at sea
- 9. Air quality: a) concentration of PM2.5; b) carbon monoxide emission

41. In addition, the online Extended MCSD SC of 12 November 2024 suggested to work on the MSSD dashboard indicator 11, “Food security Index” at the Mediterranean scale and based on new variables and data that didn't exist in 2015. Details on the core indicators are presented in the information document UNEP/MED WG.625/Inf.5.

42. There is an urgent need to strengthen capacities and resources in national administrations to address the SDGs adequately, particularly for monitoring programmes reporting on and following SDG indicators. Peer Learning, the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER), Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, and the Paper on Structures and Processes for Implementing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs in the Mediterranean Countries are among other initiatives the UNEP/MAP and Plan Bleu/RAC are taking to achieve this purpose.

43. There is a need to identify and analyse international best practices to nurture the process, boost policy learning, and acknowledge the importance of the Science–Policy–Society Interface developed by Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC), in cooperation with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), UNEP/MAP Secretariats and Plan Bleu/RAC. This approach calls for an inclusive process undertaken to consult the scientific community, government representatives, policymakers and stakeholders on the findings of the First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)⁹.

⁹ [Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin - Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report - MedECC](#)

Outreach, Communication and Advocacy

44. On the MSSD streamlined cooperation with key relevant regional initiatives and programmes in the period June 2023 – May 2025 the Secretariat has participated to a number of international and regional events and meetings, with the overall aim to promote high-level and concrete outreach, synergies and visibility that would support upscaling the implementation of the MSSD and its flagship initiatives, and on subjects related to environment, Maritime Spatial Planning, sustainable blue economy, sustainable finance, waste management in urban areas, climate change, circular economy, marine pollution/marine litter.

45. The Secretariat has participated to the Steering Committees of the WestMed¹⁰ Initiative in its role of Observer to the following SC meetings: on 21 June 2023 in Malta, on 27 October 2023 and on 29 February 2024. The main outcomes include the explicit inclusion in June 2023 WestMed Ministerial Declaration¹¹ of a reinforced the collaboration with UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable MSSD, and the follow up actions that have allowed to launch the cooperation with the Community of Practice on Marine Spatial Planning¹² PAP/RAC is member of with the role of Observer, and the WestMed working group on sustainable tourism that has been set up before the Summer 2024. The Secretariat supported the definition of the Terms of Reference of the working group and with Plan Bleu/RAC it is a member of the Advisory Body..

46. On 16-17 April 2024 Greece hosted the 9th Our Ocean Conference in Athens. The Secretariat collaborated closely with the Government of Greece for the involvement and active role of UNEP/MAP, including participation of the Coordinator as panel member in the panel on the Mediterranean, submission of side event proposals, and organisation of a communication stand. The Coordinator also participated in the “High-Level working luncheon for Heads of State Delegations on Sustainable Tourism on the Mediterranean” that was an opportunity to highlight the MSSD, the necessary transition towards a sustainable tourism, to be built on a reinforced multi-level governance and cooperation, both at national and regional level. ..

47. At the kind invitation of the Minister of Education of Cyprus, the Coordinator participated in the MED9 Ministerial Summit on Education for Sustainable Development and Green Transition in the Mediterranean Region and at the UNECE FORUM on ESD on Empowering Youth for Sustainable Futures - Entrepreneurship Education and Youth Engagement that took place on 27 - 28 June 2024, in Limassol, Cyprus.

48. Collaboration with other Regional Seas Conventions and Actions Plans (RSCAPs) is increasing and a workshop on strengthening synergies between common areas of work and priorities of G7 and the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans organized in the framework of the Italian presidency of G7 took place in Piraeus, Greece, on 9-10 October 2024 (the Regional Seas Workshop)..

49. Consultations are ongoing and there is growing interest for collaboration with OECD Istanbul Centre, who is expanding its outreach to non-OECD members through its External Committee, which addresses the MENA region relevant to the Mediterranean. It is also increasingly integrating the issue of Oceans, as the item is spanning across several directorates of the organization (Environment directorate; Trade directorate; Agriculture, Fisheries; Science, Technology and Innovation directorate)..

50. In parallel efforts are being made to strengthen the collaboration with local authorities. In this respect contacts and initial discussion with the Municipality of Barcelona and Barcelona Metropolitan Area took place in order to consider organizing joint events related to the promotion of best practices in sustainable coastal cities management, and in the framework of the promotion of the MSSD flagship initiative ‘Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award’ and the new flagship initiative ‘Mediterranean Network of Zero Net Cities’.

¹⁰ [Home - WestMED \(europa.eu\)](https://home-westmed.europa.eu)

¹¹ <https://westmed-initiative.ec.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/WestMED-2023-Revised-Ministerial-Declaration-Final-Draft.pdf>

¹² <https://maritime-spatial-planning.ec.europa.eu/msp-resources/med-msp-cop>

51. In April 2024 the English version of the Parliamentarian's Guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast, prepared by the Secretariat with substantive input by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) has been published by the UNEP Publications Committee. The Guide will also be published in Arabic, French, and Italian at the request of MASE Italy as the donor. It will be launched with support from UNEP Communication Division, which is also ensuring design services [Publication: Parliamentarian's guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast | UNEP/MAP](#)

52. The 2023 edition of the Mediterranean Coast Day, led by PAP/RAC, took place in Vlore, Albania, with the support of the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania and focusing on coastal aquifers. The event provided an opportunity to advocate for an integrated approach to the management of groundwater resources and the coastal ecosystems they underpin. The 2024 edition the [Coast Day campaign](#) focused on the role of women in achieving coastal sustainability. The campaign had two components, one on-the ground, [central celebration](#) in Annaba, Algeria organised by UNEP/MAP, PAP/RAC and the Ministry of Environment and Renewable Energies of Algeria and an on-line campaign that was implemented through the social media. Both parts of the campaign were a great success. Central event in Algeria was attended by 160 participants, which is among the highest number of participants at the official celebration in the 15 years of the Coast Day. On-line campaign through social media was a novelty for Coast Day. The campaign implemented under the slogan #WomensWave for coastal sustainability in the Mediterranean reached 12.2 million users with over 18 million visits to the system's social media accounts.

53. UNEP/MAP took part in the Mediterranean Pavilion located in the Blue Zone at UNFCCC COP 29 (Baku, Azerbaijan, 11-22 November 2024). The Mediterranean Pavilion follows the similar initiative that started at COP 27 (6-18 November 2022, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt); it is an initiative led by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) together with UNEP/MAP and a coalition of institutions dealing with climate action in the region. A number of side events are under preparation for the MedPavilion by the MAP-Barcelona Convention system, while three UNEP/MAP Components, namely SCP/RAC-MedWaves, PAP/RAC and INFO/RAC, are in the process of being funding partners of this initiative.

54. The Secretariat has been working, together with INFO/RAC, on the preparation of UNEP/MAP participation at United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC 2025) that will take place in Nice, France in June 2025, and in particular for the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of UNEP/MAP and the 30th Anniversary of the Post Rio Barcelona Convention.. The MAP@50 - A Mediterranean High-Level Event will take place on 10 June 2025. The overall aim is to highlight that the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention is being a precursor to global ocean protection efforts and remaining a key actor on ocean governance in the Mediterranean region, that it is the first regional action plan established under the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, showcasing the important role of all Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, and that the environmental multilateralism under UNEP/MAP successfully navigating regional geopolitics and delivering strong legally binding commitments, on different aspects of ocean governance, addressing in an integrated manner: pollution prevention and control ; biodiversity and ecosystems conservation; climate change; land sea interactions, using up-to-date management tools and approach.

55. Further to the preparations for the Mediterranean Day in UNOC 2025 presented in a previous section of this Report, the Secretariat and INFO/RAC have launched the [Odyssey Reloaded: "Gone with the Wind"! | INFO-RAC](#), a pan-Mediterranean digital that will celebrate the 50th anniversary of MAP and the 30th anniversary of the amended Barcelona Convention through a constellation of events around the Mediterranean Sea. "A network of routes across the Mediterranean sailed by a virtual MAP ship" will disseminate the message for the health of the sea and its coasts. The digital campaign started in January 2025 with the launch of the initiative's website [Odyssey Reloaded initiative and 2023 MED QSR launch in the framework of MAP50 anniversary](#), an interactive map of the Mediterranean highlighting the cities and ports involved in the initiative campaign website will therefore represent the virtual journey that will be made across the Mediterranean Sea [ODYSSEY Reloaded](#).

56. A joint effort at the MAP system level continues regarding gender mainstreaming. Gender focal points were identified by the RACs and together with the Coordinating Unit, a MAP Gender Strategy

is under finalisation, in order to support and coordinate efforts made at the MAP level to reach the objectives of SDG 5.

57. Finally Plan Bleu/RAC introduced a new communication format in 2023, the Rendez-vous du Plan Bleu, online events that focuses on specific subjects (Med SOx ECA, sustainable cruising, MCSD, Etc.) [Les Rendez-vous du Plan Bleu #5 : Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development: What challenges in 2023? - Plan-bleu : Environnement et développement en Méditerranée](#)

Annex I

Main Directions, Process and Timeline for the Update of the MSSD, including MSSD update Working Groups and MSSD Final evaluation

Main Directions, Process and Timeline for the Update of the MSSD, including MSSD update Working Groups and MSSD Final evaluation

The following table summarizes the process and actions/timeline for the update of the MSSD.

Date	Meetings	Key Deliverables
2023		
30 October	1 st extended MCSD SC, Online	- contribution from the MCSD to the COP 23 - initial discussion on two new flagship initiatives “Sustainable Blue Tourism” and “Protection and restoration of Seagrass/Posidonia Meadows” - discussion on the main directions, process, and timeline for the revision of the MSSD
4 December	2 nd extended MCSD SC (Portoroz, Slovenia)	- draft proposal new flagship initiatives on youth involvement - further discussion on two new flagship initiatives “Sustainable Blue Tourism” and “Protection and restoration of Seagrass/Posidonia Meadows”
2024		
21 February	3 rd extended MCSD SC, online	- Detailed substantial discussion on the approach for the MSSD update
18-19 April	25 th MCSD SC meeting (Athens, Greece)	- MSSD update process/timeline - ToR Thematic working groups - Draft new MSSD Flagship initiatives
June/July	- Set up of MSSD updated thematic working groups - Joint meeting of the thematic working groups (online)	
End August Mid-September	Draft Final Evaluation Report and recommendations including a proposal with elements for an updated MSSD	
17-19 September	54 th ECP, (Split, Croatia)	- MSSD Draft Final Evaluation Report - MSSD main substantial updated elements
12 November	4 th extended MCSD SC, online	- MSSD Final Evaluation - MSSD updated Actions - New flagship initiatives - MSSD Targets - MSSD 10 core indicators
End November	MSSD Final Evaluation delivered	
20 December	5 th extended MCSD SC, online	- MSSD updated Actions - New flagship initiatives - MSSD Targets
2025		
January/early February	2 nd Meeting of the 3 thematic working groups	

Date	Meetings	Key Deliverables
12-13 February	Thematic ad hoc MCSD meeting (Istanbul, Türkiye)	- Updated MSSD presented and discussed
March	3 rd Meeting of the 3 thematic working groups	
27-28 March	56 th ECP (Barcelona, Spain)	- MSSD targets finalization
Mid-April	Consultation on the advance version of the updated MSSD	
23 June	26 th MCSD SC meeting	
24-26 June	21 st MCSD meeting	
16-19 September	MAP Focal Points meeting	
2-5 December	COP24	