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Corinth, Greece, 24-26 June 2025

**Agenda Item 4: Evaluation of the 2016-2025 MSSD implementation**

# Final Evaluation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD)

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UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2025

**Note by the Secretariat**

In line with the Programme of Work and Budget for 2024–2025 approved by the COP23, Portoroz, Slovenia in December 2023 (Decision IG. 26/14), the UNEP/MAP Secretariat mobilized an independent consultant to deliver the Current MSSD Implementation Final Evaluation.

Following the recommendations of the 20th Meeting of the MCSD and of the 25th MCSD Steering Committee meeting of 18-19 April 2024 (Athens, Greece), and based on an inclusive methodological approach, the Final Evaluation report does not undertake an extensive new assessment of the MSSD as such, but it is rather based on the MSSD Mid-Term evaluation implemented in the biennium 2020-2021, the most recent relevant reports, the June 2024 quantitative evaluation of the MSSD Dashboard indicators, the most recent available UNEP/MAP assessment reports, namely the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report, the 2023 MedECC Special Report on Climate and Environmental Coastal Risks, the 2020 State of the Environment Report.

The Final Evaluation is complemented by additional desk review of relevant literature as well as bilateral interviews with main regional actors, MSSD flagship initiatives leaders, UNEP/MAP Regional Activity Centers (RACs).

The MSSD Final Evaluation has been was submitted to the Thematic Ad Hoc MCSD Meeting of 12-13 February 2025, in Istanbul, Türkiye, and has been positively commented.

It is expected that the 21st MCSD Meeting reviews and endorses its recommendations as appropriate.

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## I. Introduction

1. Through Decision IG.22/2 of the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 19, Athens, Greece, February 2016) the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) was adopted, as a non-legally binding instrument to translate the global 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the regional, national and local levels.

2. The MSSD follows a structure based on six objectives, embedding environmental aspects within socio-economic dimension, therefore promoting an integrated approach, while being aligned with SDGs. The six objectives are developed into 29 Strategic Directions (SD) complemented by 136 Regional and National Actions, as well as 11 Flagship Initiatives.

3. 7 targets were set for MSSD objectives 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6, while objective 4, addressing climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean, no target is defined. The MSSD structure is complemented by the monitoring and implementation axis which looks into the means for financing the implementation and for monitoring its impacts, as well as the institutional and governance aspects. This later includes four SD and 18 Regional Actions.

4. The implementation of the MSSD is monitored by 28 indicators that constitute the dashboard for monitoring the sustainable development in the Mediterranean as per CoP 20 Decision IG.23/4, Tirana, Albania, December 2017. The MSSD dashboard (MSSD-DB) is managed by Plan Bleu/RAC.

5. As foreseen by the MSSD Action 7.2.5, the 20th meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) of 14-16 June 2023 has confirmed launching the MSSD Final Evaluation (MFE) in the biennium 2024-2025, to support the update of the MSSD due to be submitted for endorsement by the CoP24, taking place in Egypt in December 2025.

6. The updated MSSD will not propose drastic changes but rather a 'light' update that takes into due consideration the most recent regional and global commitments and cooperation frameworks. In fact, the MCSD indicated that the Objectives of the MSSD still reflect the main challenges of the region while the overall objective of the MFE is to provide information on the most up to date state of implementation of the MSSD as well as recommendations to guide the update process of the Strategy.

7. The MFE builds on the MSSD mid-term evaluation (MTE) results which was performed in 2019-2020. It highlights a number of achievements, gaps, challenges, opportunities and recommendations to advance the MSSD implementation during its second phase of implementation (2021-2025). Likewise, the MTE makes use of the State of Environment and Development in Mediterranean (SoED 2020), the MedECC Special Report on Climate and Environmental Coastal Risks, of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report as well as of the quantitative evaluation of the MSSD released by Plan Bleu/RAC in June 2024.

8. In complement, the final evaluation assesses how the MSSD was and will be aligned with, and contribute to, the implementation of the most recent global and regional commitments and targets, as well as to the relevant policy and cooperation frameworks, initiatives and programs at regional level in order to further enhance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs at Mediterranean level[1].

9. The final evaluation methodology is framed by five evaluation criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Impact; they are selected for enabling further development and refining of the assessment questions to be answered in light of the overall objective of the final evaluation: "**(…) that would lead to an ambitious MSSD update in full alignment with the**

[1] Annex 1, List of global and regional commitments and frameworks

**relevant global and regional agendas and support effectively Mediterranean countries to deliver SDGs"**. For each of the five criteria, a set of questions is defined to guide the assessment and guarantee its exhaustiveness.

10. To update the mid-term evaluation results and answer assessment questions, a qualitative evaluation also entails desktop analysis and literature review[2] evidence are complemented by the quantitative data from the June 2024 MSSD-DB report, as well as by the consultation/interviews with stakeholders.

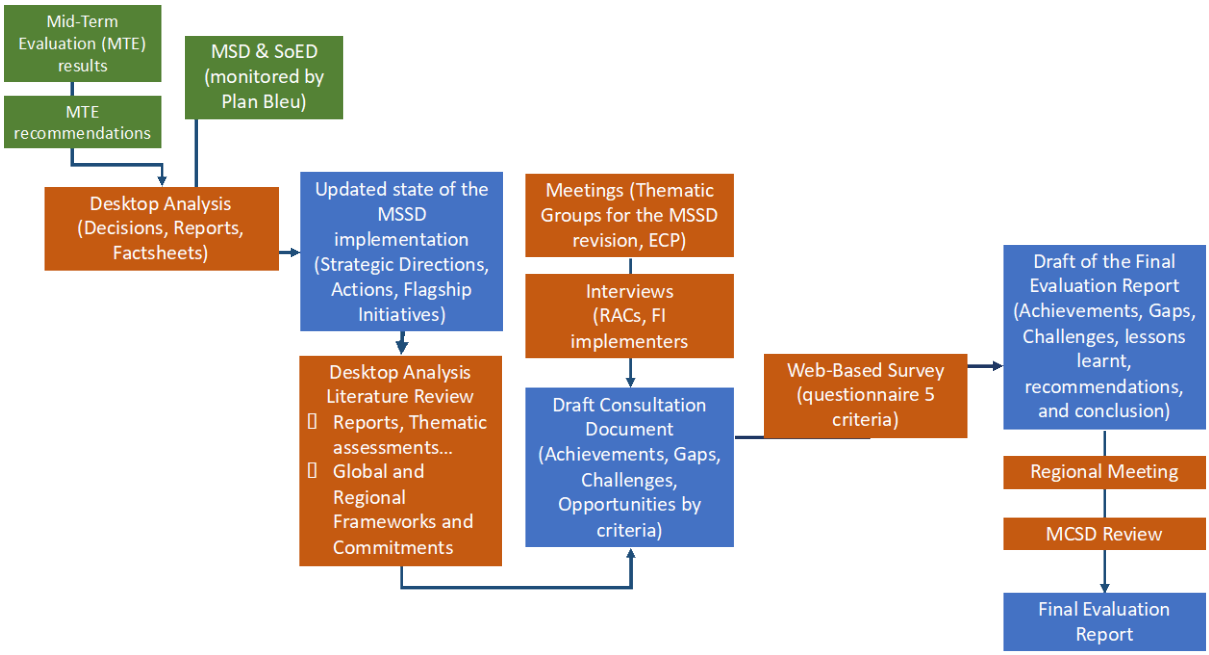


*Figure 1: The MSSD final evaluation methodology*

## II. Status of MSSD implementation to date (2024): Update on the results of the mid-term evaluation (2019-2020)

11. The final assessment of the state of implementation of the MSSD uses the same structure as the mid-term evaluation performed in 2019- 2020 (Tab. no. 1). A systemic review of the state of advancement of Strategic Directions (SD), Regional Actions and Flagships Initiatives has been undertaken. The overall state of implementation of the objectives was assessed in relation to the set targets and the registered achievements.

*Table 1: Color-coding to highlight the updated status of the MSSD implementation compared to the mid-term evaluation*

| *Color-Code* | *2019 MTE Meaning* | *2024 Final Evaluation Meaning* |
|---|---|---|
| ***BLUE*** | *Clear evidence of achievement has been found* | ***Achievement*** |
| ***GREEN*** | *Evidence of certain progress and advancement has been found that keeps the target achievable in due time* | ***Good progress*** |
| ***ORANGE*** | *Certain evidence of progress has been found but not enough to match the targeted timeline or reach the full objective* | ***Insufficient/Slow Progress*** |
| ***RED*** | *Timeline has been passed without reaching the expected target* | ***Not implemented*** |
| ***GREY*** | *Lack of reliable or consistent data to have a clear picture of the situation* | ***No Data*** |

[2] Annex 2, List of documents consulted for the desktop analysis and literature review

### 2.1 State of SDGs at the Mediterranean scale

12. Based on the most updated report the Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean 2021 Report, published in April 2022[3], the state of SDGs at the Mediterranean scale has not changed much since the MTE.

13. Progress is being made towards achieving some SDG targets (access to water, sanitation, health, electricity, and the part of renewable energy in the energy mix) but it is difficult to find related information aggregated at the Mediterranean level. All Contracting Parties (CPs) of the Barcelona Convention (BC), including the EU, have submitted, at least once, a Voluntary National Review in meetings of the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF), 12 countries have submitted it twice and two countries have presented already three national reports. Efforts are clearly ongoing to gather data and to enable countries to measure progress against the targets and indicators, in a process of implementation[4].

14. Despite these progresses "**The Mediterranean faces many challenges relating to the SDGs and no country in the area is on the right path to reach adequate levels of sustainability**"[5].

15. Only six countries out of the 21 CPs are making promising progress towards achieving a few SDGs in 2030.The situation is particularly critical for the nine other relevant SDGs to the MSSD Objectives for which none of the Mediterranean countries are considered to be on track to reach targets by 2030: SDG-2 Zero Hunger, SDG-8 Decent work and sustainable economic growth, SDG-9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG-11 Sustainable cities and communities, SDG-12 Responsible consumption and production, SDG-13 Climate Change, SDG-14 Life below water, SDG-15 Life on land, SDG-16 Peace, Justice and strong institution.

16. As regards to the cross-cutting SDGs related to social issues addressed by the MSSD, the trends are just a little more promising: eight countries are in trends to achieve SDG- 1 No poverty, two countries on SDG-3 Good Health and well-being, and one country on SDG-10 Reducing inequalities.

17. Table 2, elaborated based on the evolution rate of SDG score between 2019-2022 presented in the June 2024 Quantitative evaluation for the MSSD of Plan Bleu, summarizes the current trends in the achievement of those SDGs directly related to MSSD Objectives. The trend is classified in four categories, from the best "achieved" to the worst "major challenges" while the fifth category is related to lack of data. The number of Mediterranean countries for each trend assesses the overall situation and provides an overview of the challenges still to be met in implementing the related SDGs in the Mediterranean region.

[3] https://sdsn-mediterranean.unisi.it/2022/04/22/sustainable-development-in-the-mediterranean-still-a-long-way-towards-the-17-goals-of-the-un-2030-agenda/ - It is worth noting that Monaco is not referenced in the list of Mediterranean countries in these two SDSN-Mediterranean reports.
[4] 2023, Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report, DESA
[5] Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean 2021 Report

*Table 2:Number of Countries vs. State of SDGs implementation for linked MSSD Objectives*

| MSSD Objectives | SDGs | Achievements/ N. of Countries | Challenges remain/ N. of Countries | Significant Challenges/ N. of Countries | Major Challenges /N. of Countries | Unavailable Data/ N. of Countries |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Obj. 1 | 14 | - | 1 | 6 | 13 | 1 |
| Obj. 2 | 2 | - | 1 | 6 | 13 | 1 |
| | 15 | - | 10 | 7 | 3 | 1 |
| | 6 | 1 | 7 | 12 | 1 | - |
| Obj. 3 | 11 | - | 3 | 15 | 2 | 1 |
| | 7 | 2 | 16 | 3 | - | - |
| Obj. 4 | 13 | - | 5 | 5 | 11 | - |
| Obj. 5 | 8 | - | 3 | 10 | 7 | 1 |
| | 9 | - | 3 | 11 | 7 | - |
| | 12 | - | 7 | 6 | 7 | 1 |
| Obj. 6 | 16 | - | 5 | 9 | 6 | - |
| | 17 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 3 | 2 |
| Cross-Cutting SDGs related to social issues | 1 | 8 | 8 | 2 | - | 3 |
| | 3 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 1 |
| | 4 | - | 8 | 6 | 4 | 3 |
| | 5 | - | 2 | 12 | 6 | 1 |
| | 10 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 2 |

18. In its efforts of coherence between internal and external actions, the EU pursues the objectives of the European Green Deal at global level and progress towards SDGs through its international partnership. This is of particular interest for the MSSD new implementing phase after 2025, as some 35% of the Neighborhood Development and International Cooperation EU instrument contributes to climate change (SDG-13) including to support for sustainable energy (SDG-7), and the EU also pledged to double its international funding for biodiversity (SDG-14 and SDG-15).

19. The EU presented its first Voluntary Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in July 2023. The EU takes a comprehensive approach to delivering on the interconnected SDGs, advancing several of them through key initiatives and strategies. The European Green Deal is one of the six headline ambitions of the political guideline for 2019-2024 and it is designed to deliver in 12 SDGs.

### 2.2 Main findings in relation of the state of MSSD objectives implementation

| Objectives | State of implementation | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2019 | 2024 |
| Obj. 1: Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas | | |
| Obj. 2: Promoting resource management, food production and food security through sustainable forms of rural development | | |
| Obj. 3: Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities | | |
| Obj. 4: Addressing climate change as priority issue for the Mediterranean | | |
| Obj. 5: Transition towards a green and blue economy | | |
| Obj. 6: Improving governance in support of sustainable development | | |

20. Since the mid-term evaluation, the implementation of the MSSD has undergone several developments and notable progresses especially at regional level, thanks to the contribution of several UNEP/MAP partners, particularly MCSD members, RACs and a number of GEF and EU funded projects and programs.

21. Numerous regional and sub-regional projects are in fact supporting the achievement of the MSSD objectives; they are important way to raise awareness and promote policy and technical instruments and tools; the issues of protection, exploitation and governance of marine natural resources as well as the climate change are confirmed as of growing importance in regional and national political and policy agendas, coupled with the need to ensure sustainable socio-economic development. However, activities, funded by donors involving only some countries and covering a project-duration time, limit the effectiveness of the results and compromise their upscaling into regional effective initiatives.

22. The path of implementation of MSSD objectives and related SDGs is too slow, also due to the lack of own budget to support activities, a dedicated funding strategy and a realistic action plan. Furthermore, the MSSD is lacking visibility toward UNEP/MAP external partners and stakeholders, and even at the level of UNEP/MAP partners the MSSD is not always known. However, even if the MSSD is not a binding instrument, it is a key strategic cooperation framework, the unique regional cooperation strategy promoting sustainable development in the region, which needs to be strengthened in terms of action planning, by defining for example 3-4 years action plans with clear and realistic deliverables, both at regional and national level.

23. Many regional programs and initiatives managed by key actors refer to the MSSD as a strategic framework related to sustainable development and environmental issues in the Mediterranean. However, the monitoring of their implementation is rarely relied on to the MSSD-DB, thus their effective contribution to MSSD implementation is not tracked, while contribution is effectively there in many cases.

24. The achievement of the MSSD objectives needs broader regional initiatives and programs to induce transformative change and transitional path and ensure national appropriation beyond the UNEP/MAP system correspondents and Focal Points. Synergies have to be strengthened with relevant EU initiatives and programs, with Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), international and regional donors other than EU active in the Region.

25. The fragmentation of the MSSD general objectives into many Strategic Directions, broken down into regional and national actions does not favor integrated and more synergetic approaches, nor that can be then leveraged and upscaled into successful initiatives. Thus, the MSSD objectives should be prioritized and the MSSD structure simplified while seeking levers to optimize its implementation to be fully aligned with global and regional commitments.

26. Successful flagship initiatives are important achievements to promote and implement MSSD vision and objectives even though in some cases successful flagship initiatives shrills with the low level of implementation of the MSSD Objectives (i.e. Objectives 2 and 3). There is a need to consolidate the link of the flagship initiatives with strategic directions and to harmonize monitoring of their progress through the MSSD-DB. This approach would facilitate and improve flagship initiatives scaling-up actions towards the definition of transformative regional initiatives, while their visibility needs to be systematically ensured beyond the UNEP/MAP system in order to progressively engage with more and more stakeholders and create the basis for synergies with relevant similar regional and national initiatives.

27. The MSSD lacks for an effective communication and dissemination strategy and plans of action to mobilize actors beside the UNEP/MAP system, particularly at the national level of CPs (public sector outside environmental department, civil society, private sector, academy, etc.). Capacities to manage the MSSD implementation have been strengthened by recruiting program officers dedicated to the MCSD and MSSD activities in the UNEP/MAP Coordination Unit.

28. The MCSD has expanded the number of civil society organizations represented on its board and improved the admission processes for partners and observers. However, the effective involvement of civil society and private sector in the decision-making processes at national level is still a challenging issue when it comes to implementing transitional paths towards sustainable development. Moreover, these processes are still too closely linked to environmental issues, and it is still not possible to ensure ownership of other national stakeholders (ministers and departments other than in charge of environment or/and sustainable development, academic, private sector).

29. The MSSD-Dashboard is an important asset to monitor the state of sustainability of the Mediterranean region, the implementation of the MSSD Objectives and its targets as well as the contribution to the SDGs. Nevertheless, the number of MSSD-DB indicators is not well distributed between the different objectives: from one single indicator for Objective 5 (Green and blue economy) up to nine indicators for Objective 2 (Rural areas and Natural resources). This distribution also does not account for the relative importance of objectives. The qualitative as well as quantitative evaluation of Objective 2, monitored by a number of indicators, is the one which indicates the slowest achievements, compared to Objective 5, monitored only by one indicator, which counts number of achievements, particularly through SwitchMed program.

30. In addition, MSSD-DB indicators are not directly related to the monitoring of MSSD Actions, Targets or Flagships Initiatives. Even though the 2024 Plan Bleu Report provides a timely and exhaustive picture of the state of sustainability in the Mediterranean region, it doesn't give an exact picture of the state of implementation of the Strategy itself as the MSSD-DB does not cover adequately the level of implementation of the Strategic Directions, Actions, Flagship Activities and some Targets.

31. The MSSD successes to advance knowledge on the state of environment and sustainable development in the Mediterranean thanks to the achievement of the MedECC flagship initiative and its Mediterranean Assessment Reports that are of key reference for the technical and policy work in the region.

### 2.3 Objective 1: Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas

<table>
<tr><th>Strategic Objectives</th><th>Targets</th><th>Regional Actions</th><th>Flagship Initiatives</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">SD 1.1: Strengthen implementation of and compliance with the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention and other regional policy instruments</td><td rowspan="2">Target 1: By 2020, protect at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas SDG target 14.5.1</td><td>1.1.8 Coordination, exchange of practices</td><td rowspan="4">Flagship Initiative 1.1.10. Support the Trust Fund for Mediterranean marine protected areas</td></tr>
<tr><td>1.1.9 Roadmaps for delivery of all Barcelona Convention Protocols</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">SD 1.2: Regulatory mechanisms related to open ocean resource exploitation</td><td rowspan="2">Target 2: By 2020, End of overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing<br>SDG target 14.4.1</td><td>1.2.6 Assessment and control open ocean exploration and exploitation of non-living resources,</td></tr>
<tr><td>1.2.7 Process to further the exchange of good practices</td></tr>
</table>

*Table 3: MSSD Mid Term Evaluation state of implementation of objective 1*

**Objective 1: Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas**

| Strategic Directions | Targets | Regional Actions | Flagship Initiative |
|---|---|---|---|
| SD 1.1: Implementation and compliance with the Barcelona Convention and other regional policy instruments | By 2020, conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas | 1.2.6: Prepare a regional programme on assessment and control regarding open ocean exploration and exploitation of non-living resources | Support the Trust Fund for Mediterranean marine protected areas (1.1.10) |
| SD 1.2: Regulatory Mechanisms related to open ocean resources (MSP) | By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing | 1.2.7: Set up process to further the exchange of good practices on control approaches | |

32. Objective 1 shows a steady advancement compared to the MTE, providing policy and technical instruments to strengthen countries capacities, thanks also to a large number of projects financed by the EU and the GEF. However, in general, significant efforts remain necessary for this Objective and related SDG 14 targets which are at the centre of Barcelona Convention.

33. Both targets are not being met, with important differences though. For Target 1 (SDG target 14.5.1)[6], the promising trends in 2019 (8%), have continued at date (9%), also thanks to the successfully implemented MedFund Flagship initiative, even though the surface area of marine protected areas will not reach the 10%, while the target needs to be increased to 30% as per Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022) within the updated MSSD. Target 2 (SDG target 14.4.1)[7] is also not reached however with a much more worrying picture: in 2019, the Mediterranean and Black Sea (63.3 percent) is in second position after the Southeast Pacific (66.7 percent) in the lowest share of sustainable fishing stocks[8].

34. With reference to SD 1.1, Strengthen implementation of and compliance with the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention and other regional policy instruments is instrumental to address the recurrent practice, by several Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (CPs), of non-submission of national biennial implementation report[9].

35. With reference to SD 1.2, Regulatory mechanisms related to open ocean resource exploitation, a shortcoming is represented by the limited support for sea-land interaction which is only considered through the establishment of the ICZM Protocol where progress is scarcely scaled-up at national level. Notwithstanding the Decision IG.26/10 of the 23rd meeting of the Contracting Parties (CoP23) of December 2023 related to the "Conceptual Framework for Implementing Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean" represents a key achievement, while complementarity with sub-regional initiatives could be developed to support the Objective 1 implementation: at the level of West Mediterranean with the EU West-Med initiative[10] which places the promotion of MSP among the main priorities of participating countries, as well as with the EUSAIR Macro regional strategy[11] covering the Ionian-Adriatic areas, which embeds ICZM and MSP as well as the marine and maritime governance as cross cutting enablers.

[6] By 2020, protect and at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on best available scientific information
[7] By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics
[8] MSSD Qualitative evaluation for the MSSD implementation period 2016-2025, UNEP/MAP, Plan Bleu, June 2024, pp.17-19
[9] Regarding the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocol, the UNEP/MED IG.26/19 summarizes the general status of progress. However, the main overall findings are limited by the fact that 11 out of 22 Contracting Parties have submitted their 2020-2021 national implementation reports.
[10] https://westmed-initiative.ec.europa.eu
[11] https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu

### 2.4 Objective 2: Promoting resource management, food production and food security through sustainable forms of rural development

| Strategic Objectives | Targets | Regional Actions | Flagship Initiatives |
|---|---|---|---|
| SD 2.1: Natural Resources and ecosystems conservation | Target 3: Reduce the degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species | 2.1.9: Cross border water cooperation programs (WEFE Nexus) | Flagship Initiative 2.3.5: Promote the IUCN "Green list" in riparian states |
| SD 2.2: Traditional biodiversity, knowledge and practices | | 2.2.4: Regional collaboration between seed banks and knowledge repositories | |
| SD 2.3: Ecologically Protected Areas Networks and stakeholders' awareness | | 2.3.4: Regional network of managers of ecologically protected areas | |
| SD 2.4: Inclusive and sustainable rural development | | 2.4.4: International partnerships and networks in the promotion of traditional knowledge | |
| SD 2.5: Access of local producers to distribution channels and markets | | | |

*Table 4: MSSD Mid Term Evaluation of the state of implementation of objective 2*

**Objective 2: Resource management, food production and security through sustainable rural development**

| Strategic Directions | Targets | Regional Actions | Flagship Initiative |
|---|---|---|---|
| SD 2.1: Natural Resources and ecosystems conservation | Reduce the degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species | 2.1.9: Cross border water cooperation programmes | Promote the IUCN "Green list" in riparian states (2.3.5). |
| SD 2.2: Traditional biodiversity, knowledge and practices | | 2.2.4: Regional collaboration between seed banks and knowledge repositories; | |
| SD 2.3: Protected Areas Networks and stakeholders awareness | | 2.3.4: Regional network of managers of ecologically protected areas | |
| SD 2.4: Inclusive and sustainable rural development | | 2.4.4: International partnerships and networks in the promotion of traditional knowledge | |
| SD 2.5: Access of local producers to distribution channels and markets | | | |

36. Under Objective 2, Strategic Directions and related actions are numerous (5 SD and 25 Regional and National Actions). The MSSD-DB includes indicators related to biodiversity, to food security and agriculture and to water and sanitation.

37. The State of implementation of Objective 2 is all in all confirmed as not on track.

38. Target 3 has not progressed much since the MTE and biodiversity loss remains a major issue at global and regional level.

39. Objective 2 addresses the issue of the protection of biodiversity linked to agricultural, livestock and other natural resources exploitation in rural activities. This gives an objective that is too broad with strategic directions that encompass several issues to lead to efficient actions and effective results. The issue of sustainable rural development should be addressed in relation of the coastal management issues, and the land-based pollution, therefore it should be linked to Objective 1 and in particular to Strategic Direction 1.2: Establish and enforce regulatory mechanisms, including Maritime Spatial Planning, to prevent and control unsustainable open ocean resource exploitation.

40. 6 out of 9 Indicators of Objective 2 are under SD 2.1 (food availably rate, water stress, access to clean water and sanitation, agricultural area used by organic farming) and are showing a low progress, while it is difficult to monitor the progress of other SDs.

41. Instruments are developed to strengthen CPs' capacities; however, countries still face critical challenges to ensures health of ecosystems, and ecosystem services as a priority, especially in the face of global trends: population growth, urbanization, increasing need for natural resources, climate change impact. A good positive example is represented by the WEFE NEXUS initiative that, taking into account the increasing scarcity of available water resources, address the priority action to plan for and manage sustainability transitions using preventive, integrative and inclusive approaches and coordinated responses across the Water-Energy-Food sectors[12].

42. The Flagship initiative "Promote the IUCN Green list in riparian states to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of parks managing bodies created" shows a good progress through an increased number of protected areas proposed by EU-Mediterranean countries (France, Italy) and North Africa countries (Morocco and Algeria).

### 2.5 Objective 3: Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities

| Strategic Objectives | Targets | Regional Actions | Flagship Initiatives |
|---|---|---|---|
| SD 3.1: Spatial planning towards sustainable territorial cohesion | | 3.1.5: Monitor coastal urbanization and encroachment | FI 3.1.9 "Environment Friendly City" Award (3.1.9) |
| | | 3.1.6: Capacity building on spatial planning regulations | |
| | | 3.1.7: Guidelines for planning green and blue infrastructures | |
| | | 3.1.8: Identify Mediterranean urban biodiversity hotspots | |
| SD 3.2: Inclusive and participatory urbanization | By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization | 3.2.4: Regional Cities networking and partnership | FI 3.2.5 Sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean (...) |
| SD 3.3: Protection and rehabilitation of historic urban areas | | 3.3.5: Networks of historic cities | |
| SD 3.4: Sustainable waste management and circular economy | By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction and reuse | 3.4.4: Database of waste and material flows | FI 3.4.5: Undertake regional assessments and knowledge exchanges of high- and low-tech solutions to achieve waste reduction |
| SD 3.5: Efficient integrated public transport systems | | 3.5.4: Regional transport and mobility framework | |
| SD 3.6: Green buildings and built environment | | 3.6.2: Green Building Standards frameworks | |
| SD 3.7: Urban resilience to reduce vulnerability to risks | | 3.7.5: Inventory of local natural risk responses | |

[12] SoED, Plan Bleu 2020

*Table 5: MSSD Mid Term Evaluation of the state of implementation of objective 3*

**Objective 3: Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities**

| Strategic Directions | Targets | Regional Actions | Flagship Initiatives |
|---|---|---|---|
| SD 3.1: Spatial planning towards sustainable territorial cohesion | By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization | 3.1.5: Monitor coastal urbanization and encroachment | "Environment Friendly City" Award (3.1.9) |
| SD 3.2: Inclusive and participatory urbanization | | 3.1.6: Capacity building on spatial planning regulations | |
| SD 3.3: Protection and rehabilitation of historic urban areas | | 3.1.7: Guidelines for planning green and blue infrastructures | Sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean (...) (3.2.5) |
| SD 3.4: Sustainable waste management and circular economy | | 3.1.8: Identify Mediterranean urban biodiversity hotspots | |
| SD 3.5: Efficient integrated public transport systems | By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse | 3.2.4: Regional Cities networking and partnership | |
| SD 3.6: Green buildings and built environment | | 3.3.5: Networks of historic cities | Undertake regional assessments and knowledge exchanges of high- and low-tech solutions to achieve waste reduction (3.4.5) |
| SD 3.7: Urban resilience to reduce vulnerability to risks | | 3.4.4: Database of waste and material flows | |
| | | 3.5.4: Regional transport and mobility framework | |
| | | 3.6.2: Green Building Standards frameworks | |
| | | 3.7.5: Inventory of local natural risk responses | |

43. Objective 3 registers some improvement compared to the MTE, however its implementation remains quite weak.

44. While some progress has been made toward the SDG 11 related to transport and national urban policies, vast gaps remain in areas like tackling the proliferation of slums, inadequate public space and insufficient waste management. The interconnected issues considered by Objective 3 is too fragmented into many SDs, while for many SDs data is not available or difficult to find

45. Planning and managing sustainable cities have to be addressed through the integrative land-sea interactions approach: Objective 3 might be developed around fewer SDs, by including SDs on integrated public transport systems, Protection and rehabilitation of historic urban areas, Green buildings and built environment, including appropriate reuse of construction and demolition wastes and inclusive and participatory urbanization, within SD spatial planning towards sustainable territorial cohesion. The related paradigms promoted by the Barcelona Convention and its protocols have to be disseminated besides the circle of UNEP/MAP national correspondents and partners to be adopted for other strategic processes, in particular the National Determined Contributions as well as the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans which prioritize coastal degradation issues as well as resilient cities and infrastructures.

46. Achievements are made by sub-regional projects (i.e. WES project, INTERREG MED, INTERREG NEXT MED, INTERREG ADRION), however results need to be taken more fully into account by stakeholders outside the UNEP/MAP circle, in order to be scaled up and move towards transformative policies and changes.

47. The three successful flagship initiatives should be upscaled to support exchange of best practices, innovative tools and capacity building to local authorities in order to make them more useful for actors.

### 2.6 Objective 4: Addressing climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean

| Strategic Objectives | Targets | Regional Actions | Flagship Initiatives |
|---|---|---|---|
| SD 4.1: Climate change knowledge and decision-making processes | | 4.1.5 : Mediterranean climate research agenda | FI 4.1.9: Establish a regional science-policy interface mechanism on Climate Change |
| | | 4.1.6: Regional climate change monitoring and analysis | |
| | | 4.1.7: Indicators and tools for climate vulnerability and mitigation | |
| | | 4.1.8 : Regional courses on Mediterranean climate change | |
| SD 4.2: Climate-smart and resilient responses | | | |
| SD 4.3: Climate finance from public and private sectors | | 4.3.3: Capacities to access international climate finance | |
| SD 4.4: Reforms for climate change responses, including the energy sector | | 4.4.7: Climate change knowledge and innovation centre | |
| | | 4.4.8 : Trans-Mediterranean power grids | |

*Table 6: MSSD Mid Term Evaluation of the state of implementation of objective 4*

**Objective 4. Addressing climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean**

| Strategic Directions | Regional Actions | Flagship Initiative |
|---|---|---|
| SD 4.1: Climate change knowledge and decision-making processes | 4.1.5 : Mediterranean climate research agenda | Establish a regional science-policy interface mechanism on Climate Change (4.1.9) |
| | 4.1.6: Regional climate change monitoring and analysis | |
| | 4.1.7: Indicators and tools for climate vulnerability and mitigation | |
| | 4.1.8 : Regional courses on Mediterranean climate change | |
| SD 4.2: Climate-smart and resilient responses | | |
| SD 4.3: Climate finance from public and private sectors | 4.3.3: Capacities to access international climate finance | |
| SD 4.4: Reforms for climate change responses, including the energy sector | 4.4.7: Climate change knowledge and innovation centre | |
| | 4.4.8 : Trans-Mediterranean power grids | |

48. Objective 4 indicates a steady advancement compared to MTE.

49. While the climate change impacts are already increasingly weighing on the state of the Mediterranean region and the projections are becoming more and more alarming, awareness of these challenges by the riparian countries is growing considerably through the implementation of strategies and action policies for greater integration of climate change issues into development policies.

50. To this end a good achievement concerns not only the ratification of the Paris Agreement by all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, but also the elaboration (2015), and the update (2019) of their National Determined Contribution (NDC) reaffirming their commitments to participate at the global reduction emission efforts. Thus, and even if the Mediterranean countries contribute to 1,2% of the global CO2 emissions[13], they are officially committed to achieve global peaking and "climate neutrality" by 2050. There is a positive trend visible in most of the countries for SDG 13 – Climate Action.[14]

[13] MSSD- Quantitative evaluation for the MSSD implementation 2016-2025, Plan Bleu, June 2024
[14] https://www.wetlands.org/publication/coastal-and-marine-ecosystems-as-nature-based-solutions-in-new-or-updated-nationally-determined-contributions/

51. Objective 4 lacks target and it is monitored by two MSSD-DB Indicators, Ind. 21 “Green House Gas emissions per capita”, and Ind. 22 “Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP” (SDG 7.3.1) which are both performing at different speeds, even among countries with equivalent income levels.

52. Despite positive trend in most of Mediterranean countries, and according to the Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean 2021 Report, only three Mediterranean countries are on track to achieve SDG-13 while 11 have a “moderately increasing” index score and 9 “stagnating” index. More efforts are still needed to reach the target of reducing net GHG emissions. The European Union Green Deal objective to achieve European neutrality by 2050 should provide an incentive to Mediterranean countries in the achievement of their climate action. Targets are to be included in the updated MSSD, based on UN Paris Agreement and EU Green Deal. It is also advisable to simplify SDs by merging SD 4.3 Climate finance from public and private sectors with SD 4.2 Climate-smart and resilient responses to improve impact and engagement capacity of both SDs.

53. Structured synergies with the updated UNEP/MAP Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework and MedProgramme on Climate Change resilience should be also considered.

54. The Flagship initiative “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” (MedECC) constitutes a success story that has already published a number of Mediterranean Assessment Reports that are of key reference for the technical and policy work in the region.

### 2.7 Objective 5: Transition towards a green and blue economy

| Strategic Objectives | Targets | Regional Actions | Flagship Initiatives |
|---|---|---|---|
| SD 5.1: Green and decent jobs for all | | 5.1.4: Guidelines on green jobs and social entrepreneurship | |
| SD 5.2: Development, progress and well-being | | 5.2.2: Open database on societal progress and well-being | |
| SD 5.3: Sustainable Consumption and Production | | 5.3.3: SCP Regional Action | |
| SD 5.4 : Environmental and social innovation | | 5.4.4: Regional network of green and social incubators | FI 5.4.5: Mediterranean business award for environmental innovation |
| SD 5.5: Sustainable Public and Private Investment | | 5.5.3: Sustainable investment and CSR<br>5.5.4: Environmental and social international investissements | |
| SD 5.6: Greener and inclusive market | **Target 6:** by 2035 the majority of Mediterranean countries are committed to green or sustainable public procurement programmes | 5.6.3: Green fiscal and financial reform<br>5.6.4: Regional trade cooperation | FI 5.6.5 Sustainable Public Procurement |

*Table 7: MSSD Mid Term Evaluation of the state of implementation of objective 5*

**Objective 5: Transition towards a green and blue economy**

| Strategic Directions | Target | Regional Actions | Flagship Initiatives |
|---|---|---|---|
| SD 5.1: Green and decent jobs for all | By 2025, the majority of Mediterranean countries are committed to green or sustainable public procurement programmes | 5.1.4: Guidelines on green jobs and social entrepreneurship | Mediterranean business award for environmental innovation (5.4.5) |
| SD 5.2: Development, progress and well-being. | | 5.2.2: Open database on societal progress and wellbeing | |
| SD 5.3: Sustainable Consumption and Production | | 5.3.3: SCP Regional Action | |
| SD 5.4 : Environmental and social innovation | | 5.4.4: Regional network of green and social incubators | |
| SD 5.5: Sustainable Public and Private Investment | | 5.5.3: Sustainable investment and CSR | Sustainable Public Procurement (5.6.5) |
| SD 5.6: Greener and inclusive market | | 5.5.4: Environmental and social international investissements | |
| | | 5.6.3: Green fiscal and financial reform | |
| | | 5.6.4: Regional trade cooperation | |

55. Objective 5, which identifies the promotion and support of green businesses as a key element for the transition to a more circular economy, is based on six strategic directions, eight regional actions, two flagship initiatives and one target.

56. As for the MTE, Objective 5 shows insufficient progress.

57. Mediterranean countries are struggling to mainstream green and sustainable development principles into their economies. The European Green deal and its external dimension represents an opportunity to integrate the green economy as a new paradigm into economic development plans, and to capitalize on the occasions that green economy provides to focus on collective and shared challenges.

58. The Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in Mediterranean (2016-2027, SCP Action Plan) is supported by the SwitchMed program which registered important achievements. However, on green Jobs and Sustainable Consumption and Production progress remains insufficient, as reported by MTE, while the Target 6 under Objective 5 is not reached given that Mediterranean countries, especially the non-EU ones, have to strengthen efforts to achieve their commitments to green or sustainable public procurement programs.
59. Sustainable Public and Private Investment remains also quite problematic due to harmful subsidies, in fact also the relevant flagship initiative on Integrate sustainability principles into public procurement at national and local levels is still challenging and has not been launched yet. It might be redefined and expanded embedding green finance, linked to green taxonomy, where progress is noted only at the European Level.

60. On the other hand, the flagship initiative Mediterranean business award for environmental innovation is fully and successfully achieved and might be upscaled, by promoting the WeMedBusiness Platform to support green business and start-ups with mentoring/consultancy/training services, while liaising with the Smarts Specialization Strategies platforms of the European Commission which cover also non-EU countries.

61. Objective 5 shall focus on green and decent jobs, Sustainable consumption and production and sustainable public and private investment. Accordingly merging SDs approach might be advisable (i.e: SD 5.2 might be merged with SD 5.1; SD 5.4 might be merged with SD 5.3; SD 5.6 might be merged with SD 5.5).

### 2.8 Objective 6: Improving governance in support of sustainable development

| Strategic Objectives | Targets | Regional Actions | Flagship Initiatives |
|---|---|---|---|
| SD 6.1: Dialogue and cooperation on emergency-preparedness | | 6.1.2 : Cooperation on emergency-preparedness<br>6.1.3 on Population flows | |
| SD 6.2: Engagement of stakeholders in the governance and decision-making processes | By 2025, two-thirds of Mediterranean countries have acceded to the Aarhus Convention | | FI 6.2.3: Adoption of implementation of the Aarhus Convention |
| SD 6.3: Implementation and compliance with environmental obligations | | | FI 6.3.5: Capacity building programs related to environmental obligations |
| SD 6.4: Education and research for sustainable development | | 6.4.5: Research and innovation<br>6.4.6 : Education for sustainable development | |
| SD 6.5: Regional capabilities for information management | | 6.5.3: Data and information production and sharing<br>6.5.4 : Monitoring programmes | FI 6.5.5 Publicly accessible integrated information system |

*Table 8: MSSD Mid Term Evaluation of the state of implementation of objective 6*

**Objective 6: Improving governance in support of sustainable development**

| Strategic Directions | Targets | Regional Actions | Flagship initiatives |
|---|---|---|---|
| SD 6.1: Dialogue and cooperation on emergency-preparedness | By 2025, two-thirds of Mediterranean countries have acceded to the Aarhus Convention | 6.1.2 : Cooperation on emergency-preparedness | Capacity building programmes related to environmental obligations (6.3.5) |
| SD 6.2: Engagement of stakeholders in the governance and decision-making processes | | 6.1.3 on Population flows | |
| SD 6.3: Implementation and compliance with environmental obligations | | | |
| SD 6.4: Education and research for sustainable development | | 6.4.5: Research and innovation | Publicly accessible integrated information system (6.5.5) |
| | | 6.4.6 : Education for sustainable development | |
| SD 6.5: Regional capabilities for information management | | 6.5.3: Data and information production and sharing | |
| | | 6.5.4 : Monitoring programmes | |

62. Objective 6 advancements positively continue, as highlighted by MTE: all indicators are providing positive trends, but the R&D expenditure as a proportion of GDP which remains less than 1% in South Mediterranean countries, while increasing constantly (+0,2%) in Northern countries.

63. Regional initiatives are showing progress towards more inclusive and sustainable governance patterns. The implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD) is well advancing through the elaboration of the Action Plan, the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) has been launched and it fully operative, the institutionalization of a robust and effective regional mechanism to discuss, regulate and strengthen sustainable national policies, particularly in non-environmental areas, has not been achieved. However, SIMPEER, the peer review mechanism of the national strategies for sustainable development in Mediterranean, provides a good basis for building such a mechanism.

64. Promising achievements have been made under the flagship initiative on the adoption of implementation of the Aarhus Convention, even if the target has not been reached yet: it needs

the adhesion of two countries[15] to achieve the "two third of Mediterranean countries have acceded to the Aarhus convention".

65. Despite the increasing number of forums integrating civil society into the governance of sustainable development at the regional and national level through the involvement of civil society shortcomings persist, particularly at the level of the siloed approach of sustainable development issues, and the involvement of civil society and the private sector in decision-making, particularly in non-EU countries. This issue of integration should be further developed to bring more consistency into regional/Mediterranean environmental governance and efficiently mobilize it in order to achieve SDGs in the region, in line with the trend observed at the overall level to shift from fragmented governance of maritime affairs towards more inclusive governance of sustainable development.

### 2.9 Status of means of implementation and monitoring of the MSSD

| Strategic Objectives | Regional Actions |
|---|---|
| SD 7.1. Structures for implementation at national and regional scale, with adequate resourcing | 7.1.2: Improve the impact of the MCSD |
| | 7.1.3: Enlarge the MCSD |
| | 7.1.4: Improve visibility of the MCSD |
| | 7.1.5: Ensure that the MCSD promotes the exchange of good practices |
| SD 7.2: Establish regional processes for the implementation and monitoring of the MSSD | 7.2.1: Ensure the necessary resources for the implementation and monitoring of the MSSD |
| | 7.2.2: Prepare an implementation plan for the MSSD |
| | 7.2.3: MCSD support to national sustainable development policies |
| | 7.2.4: Participatory midterm evaluation of the MSSD |
| | 7.2.5 : New MSSD for 2026-2035 |
| SD 7.3 Strengthen capacity for financing the MSSD | 7.3.1: Project portfolio supporting MSSD actions, and funding sources |
| | 7.3.2: Provide capacity-building workshops in fundraising to national governments and stakeholders |
| | 7.3.3: Create an investment facility for sustainable development implementation |
| | 7.3.4: Encourage private sector to engage with civil society and foster greater corporate social responsibility |
| 7.4: Ensure the regular monitoring of the MSSD | 7.4.2: MCSD monitoring of the MSSD implementation |
| | 7.4.3: Strategy monitoring systems based on existing and planned data- sharing and information systems of the MAP |
| | 7.4.4: Develop and populate a dashboard of sustainability indicators for the Mediterranean |

[15] "Twelve of the 22 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention are Parties to the Aarhus Convention" SoED, Plan Bleu 2020

*Table 9: MSSD Mid Term Evaluation of the state of implementation of means and implementation and monitoring MSSD's axis*

**Means of implementation and monitoring of the MSSD**

| Strategic Directions | Regional Actions |
|---|---|
| SD 7.1. Structures for implementation at national and regional scale, with adequate resourcing | 7.1.2: Improve the impact of the MCSD |
| | 7.1.3: Enlarge the MCSD |
| | 7.1.4: Improve visibility of the MCSD |
| | 7.1.5: Ensure that the MCSD promotes the exchange of good practices |
| SD 7.2: Establish regional processes for the implementation and monitoring of the MSSD | 7.2.1: Ensure the necessary resources for the implementation and monitoring of the MSSD |
| | 7.2.2: Prepare an implementation plan for the MSSD |
| | 7.2.3: MCSD support to national sustainable development policies |
| | 7.2.4: Participatory midterm evaluation of the MSSD |
| | 7.2.5 : New MSSD for 2026-2035 |
| SD 7.3 Strengthen capacity for financing the MSSD | 7.3.1: Project portfolio supporting MSSD actions, and funding sources |
| | 7.3.2: Provide capacity-building workshops in fundraising to national governments and stakeholders |
| | 7.3.3: Create an investment facility for sustainable development implementation |
| | 7.3.4: Encourage private sector to engage with civil society and foster greater corporate social responsibility |
| 7.4: Ensure the regular monitoring of the MSSD | 7.4.2: MCSD monitoring of the MSSD implementation |
| | 7.4.3: Strategy monitoring systems based on existing and planned data-sharing and information systems of the MAP. |
| | 7.4.4: Develop and populate a dashboard of sustainability indicators for the Mediterranean |

66. The implementation of the MSSD is based on stakeholder ownership and collective process facilitated by the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention System. The chapter 3 of the MSSD addresses the implementation of the Strategy, focusing on (i) institutional structures and processes, (ii) finances, (iii) monitoring system and regional dashboard.

67. The institutional structures Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) and its Steering Committee, and processes to regularly report on MSSD implementation are strengthened, since MTE. However, the process is still lacking a monitoring system to collect and share data on implemented actions as well as an Action Plan and financing strategy. In fact, the MSSD is still under-financed compared to its ambition.

68. The monitoring process of the sustainability in the Mediterranean is well set and progressing, including the proposed core indicators whose main objective is to provide a clear and easy evidence to deliver message on the main challenges and SGDs level of implementation in the Mediterranean.

69. The MSSD-DB is today complete, it provides a broad range of indicators which play an important role in measuring the progress made by CPs towards the SDGs. However, the number of indicators has to be balanced between the different MSSD objectives and emphasize on core indicators to assess progress towards sustainable development in the Mediterranean. Some core indicators should be gendered and youth sensitive to address the persistent issue of gender inequalities and youth involvement and monitor the mainstreaming of these issues in the MSSD objectives and strategic directions. Indicators to monitor the implementation of the Strategy have to be defined relied to existing set of indicators in order to not burden reporting capacities of countries.

70. Given the key role of the flagship initiatives as MSSD implementation enablers, it would be key to define specific indicators to monitor their progress and link them clearly with the current indicators.

71. Science-policy products are not widely used at the country level and lack visibility beyond Convention stakeholders. Attention should be paid to providing scientific findings into policy-oriented knowledge or the practical application of them towards the general public and decision-makers at the national level. The MedECC should be consolidated to constitute a science policy interface with more concreteness, remaining an independent body connected to existing Mediterranean structures and institutions.

72. The MSSD is part of Programme 5 of the Mid-Term Strategy 2022-2027 (MTS). The MSSD is also linked to other MTS outcomes and expected deliverables, further highlighting the interlinkages between the MTS and the MSSD action plan, thus mutually contributing to respective processes, including communication and outreach efforts as well as financial support.

## III. Lessons learnt and recommendations

73. The assessment set out above shows a mixed MSSD state of implementation: while several actions have been carried out by different stakeholders, particularly at regional level, the targets are not reached, and objectives are not generally being met. In particular the findings indicate that progress, even if limited, is being made towards the objective 1, 4 and 6, while objectives 2, 3 and 5 lack behind.

74. Following the assessment of the MSSD state of implementation, a review of the questions posed in the five evaluation dimensions (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and impact)[16] shows that the added value of the MSSD as a strategic framework for the implementation of the SDGs in the Mediterranean region is in no way called into question. The overall findings indicate that the MSSD is recognized as a key framework to contextualize SDGs at the Mediterranean level.

75. The relevance of the MSSD is further growing as well as the awareness of the global community and CPs on the importance to connect SDG-14 with the other SDGs for example through Marine Spatial Planning[17] and leveraging interlinkages between Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other Goals towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[18].

76. Findings equally suggest that the MSSD 2016-2025 is relevant for addressing challenges and opportunities, policies, plans and projects on environment and sustainable development issues and are well-aligned with the priorities of the international and regional community and major actors.

### Lessons learnt and good practices

77. Successful Flagship Initiatives are those with a well-known implementing agency, ensuring a good visibility, promoting the results, thus, they success mobilizing funding among their “classical” donors and partners.

78. Achieved regional actions are those which succeeded in taking advantage of financing opportunities, mainly EU and GEF funds. They provide tools and instruments as well as a common understanding and common policy and action approaches towards the implementation of the MSSD.

[16] Output no.3: Draft of the MSSD final evaluation report
[17] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X17300520
[18] https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/ID_8_Leveraging_interlinkages.pdf

79. However, the limited geographic scope to some countries and the short- and medium-term timeline of projects don't allow the achievement of MSSD objectives and regional actions towards a transformative action and transition path.
80. The MSSD is a useful intergovernmental platform to support sustainable development implementation in the Mediterranean. The main identified strengths are dialogue and soft diplomacy to develop a common regional approach towards SD in Mediterranean, cooperation and partnerships, project support and knowledge sharing. However, remaining challenges is linked to visibility beyond the UNEP/MAP system circle, more effectiveness and efficiency, indicators to monitor progress and advancements.

**Recommendations**

81. The national appropriation of the MSSD must be reinforced: Capacity building to support CPs in embedding MSSD objectives and national actions within National Strategies should be strengthened, providing means and tools to support them (i.e. SIMPEER, national and local meetings, communication tools, platforms, projects, etc.).

82. It might be advisable to identify and propose ways to further facilitate the submission of the national implementation reports.

83. Breaking down fragmentation and achieving the deep transformative changes required needs connect SDG-14 with the other SDGs, and to focus on synergies between climate action and sustainable development to overcoming challenges, providing win-win solutions, and minimizing trade-offs.[19] Indeed, SDG-13 is a lever to achieve the SDG-14 in Mediterranean as the region is a climate hot-spot and the CPs' and Partners' climate actions are prioritizing coastal and marine issues in their NDC and NSBAP. In addition, adaptation and mitigation actions planned by countries to strengthen the resilience of coastal and marine areas, contribute to the achievement of other MSSD objectives/SDGs, in particular SDGs 15 (Land), 6 (Water and Sanitation), 7 (Energy), 8 (Sustainable economic growth), 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), 11 (Cities and Infrastructure) and SDG 12 (Consumption and Production).

84. Thus, a number of SDs of Objective 2 (Resource management, food production, rural development) and of Objective 3 (Sustainable Mediterranean cities) can be either merged or embedded under Objective 1; while Objective 5 (Transition towards a green and blue economy) should be more focused: on green jobs and circular economy, Sustainable Public and Private Investment linked to green financing and sustainable finance instruments

85. Closing the gap between policy visions and implementation processes is a key aspect for the MSSD successful delivery, both at regional and national level. To this aim, a more effective participatory process of stakeholders is to be promoted, as well as a more operational integrated approach among the different Strategic Directions, Action and Flagship Initiatives under the same MSSD Objectives. Ownership of the MSSD by national stakeholders outside the UNEP/MAP system and partners as an effective framework for contributing effectively to the achievement of the SDGs at national level is essential.

86. The MSSD must apply a more integrated approach, prioritize its objectives and simplify its structure while seeking levers to optimize its implementation to be fully aligned with global and regional commitments. Among the six transformations to achieve SDGs through an integrated framework, three are already covered by the MSSD "Sustainable food, land, water and oceans", "Sustainable cities and communities" and "Health, well-being and demography". Thus, the updated MSSD must add a focus on "Energy, decarbonation and sustainable energy" and "Digital revolution for sustainable development"

[19] https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/UN%20Synergy%20Solutions%20for%20Climate%20and%20SDG%20Action-4_0.pdf

87. The MSSD considers gender as a cross-cutting issue. However, there are only two strategic directions (SD 2.4 and SD 5.1) that specifically target gender issues, and there is no means to monitor their specific achievements. Accordingly, gender and youth issues should be mainstreamed in SD and RA, and indicators should be gendered and youth sensitive.

88. There is a need to link the flagship initiatives with regional actions and monitor them with MSSD-DB Indicators to make results more visible and promote their appropriation by countries. Furthermore, successful flagship initiatives should be promoted and scaled-up through appropriate funding, identifying sustainability-driven initiatives. Communication activities must be integrated into the initiative implementation plan, in order to disseminate results to decision-makers and stakeholders outside the UNEP/MAP circle, especially at the local level.

89. While linking the flagship initiatives with the objectives of the MSSD, it should be stressed that some of the flagship initiatives could contribute to more than one MSSD objective. For instance, the new flagship initiative which is being prepared on the Mediterranean Strategy on Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus (WEFE Nexus), could contribute in concrete terms to the achievement of the Objective 2 Promoting resource management, food production and food security, Objective 4 Addressing climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean and Objective 5 Transition towards a green and blue economy.

90. The External dimension of the European Green Deal represents a unique opportunity for cooperation on strategic priorities, in particular, the SDG 14 and SDGs 13 & 15. Some of the building blocks to reach the European Green Deal goal (climate neutrality by 2050) could be envisaged as potential new flagship initiatives of the MSSD, or key elements for the revision of current ones.

91. Synergies have to be strengthened with relevant EU initiatives and Programmes, with Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and donors other than EU active in the Region.

92. A targeted funding strategy and realistic action plans with clear results are needed, covering a period of three to four years. This could help to mobilize new resources. Nevertheless, there is a need to investigate new financing instruments where the business model is geared towards protecting marine ecosystems (innovative insurance products, modulation of insurance premiums, concessions for private sector, etc.). The internal funding provided by the UNEP/MAP system to finance the MSSD implementation of the MSSD through its core budget and the MTS should be better promoted to raise external funding.

93. There is the need to mobilize the private sector and strengthen the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes and promote a more concrete gender approach into the SDs.

94. Indicators have to be balanced under the different objectives and be more specific. However, MSSD-DB indicators of the MSSD-DB should be maintained in order to not lose the trend analysis, and targets have to be revised in order to better match objectives, aligned to the recent regional and global commitments and frameworks, and be specific to the Mediterranean.

95. Finally, the UNEP/MAP system should consider the opportunity of the next UN Ocean Summit, in 2025, to include the MSSD as the strategic framework for implementing the Barcelona Convention and its protocols, within the framework of the final declaration and/or in decisions relating to the Mediterranean. UNEP/MAP must ensure a significant presence at this Summit and, in particular, at the Pavilion and the day dedicated to the Mediterranean; in the same aim, the revision process should be used to encourage country parties to promote the MSSD as a strategic framework for implementing the SDGs and Agenda 2030 in the Mediterranean. The MSSD can be then adopted by UNEP/MAP partners, particularly the UfM and the EC, as a common Mediterranean SD framework. Thus, it will help to position the MSSD as a strategic reference

document to capture funding, such as finance resulting from the implementation of the European Green Deal at EU external level, the GEF habilitating activities, the Green Climate Fund, etc.

## IV. Elements for the updated MSSD, including a proposal for the updated MSSD structure

96. To avoid radical change of the MSSD, the logic of the updated MSSD maintains the same structure:

**Vision to 2050 → Objectives to 2030 → Strategic Directions / Regional Actions / Targets**

97. The revised MSSD should be more action-oriented, with concise realistic targets and deliverables, and try to avoid any additional layer of commitments for countries, taking advantage of the plans and strategies already adopted at national, regional and global levels.

| Objectives | SDGs | Strategic directions |
|---|---|---|
| Objective 1: Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas | SDG 14<br><br>SDG 6<br>SDG 7<br>SDG 11<br>SDG 15 | SD 1.1: Strengthen implementation of and compliance with the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention, notably the ICZM, land-based sources, specially protected area and biological diversity Protocols (SD 2.2 & SD 2.4 – SD2.1 & SD 2.3 ) (SD3.1, SD3.2, SD3.4, SD3.5) |
| | | SD 1.2 Establish and enforce regulatory mechanisms, including Maritime Spatial Planning to prevent and control unsustainable open-source resource exploitation |
| Objective 4: Addressing climate change adaptation as a priority issue for the Mediterranean | SDG 13 | SD 4.1 Increase scientific knowledge |
| | | SD 4.2 + SD 4.3: Financing climate change |
| | | SD 4.4: Institutional and legal reforms for the effective mainstreaming of climate change responses into national and local development framework particularly in the energy sector |
| Objective 5: Transition towards a green and blue economy | SDG 8<br>SDG 9<br>SDG 12 | SD 5.1_ Green and decent jobs for all + SD 5.2_Review the definitions and measurement of Development, progress and well-being) |
| | | SD 5.3_ Sustainable Consumption and Production + SD 5.4_ Environmental and social innovation |
| | | SD 5.5_ Sustainable Public and Private Investment + SD 5.6_ 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 |
| Objective 6: Improving governance in support of sustainable development | SDG 16<br>SDG 17 | 6.1_ Enhance regional, sub-regional and cross-border dialogue and cooperation, including on emergency preparedness |
| | | 6.2_ Promote the engagement of civil-society, scientist, local community and other stakeholders, in order to secure inclusive processes and integrity in decision making |
| | | 6.3_ Promote implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements including through policy coherence based on inter-ministerial coordination |
| | | 6.4_ Promote education and research for sustainable development |
| | | 6.5_ Enhance regional capabilities for information management |
| Cross-cutting issues | SDG 1<br>SDG 3<br>SDG 4<br>SDG 5<br>SDG 10 | |

## V. Conclusions

98. The MSSD final evaluation provides an update of the mid-term evaluation performed in 2019. Progress in the implementation of regional actions is recorded thanks to numerous projects mainly funded by the GEF and the EU, supporting UNEP/MAP system and partners. Projects provided interesting demonstrative tools and instruments.

99. However, these promising results must be an asset for building broader regional initiatives to achieve the MSSD Objectives which have evolved slowly since 2019 and are not in track to reach 2025 targets (MSSD) nor SDGs targets (2030).

100. In this way, MSSD has succeeded in establishing itself as a useful intergovernmental platform to support sustainable development in the Mediterranean. The main identified strengths are dialogue and soft diplomacy to develop a common regional approach towards sustainable development in Mediterranean, cooperation and partnerships, project support and knowledge sharing. However, remaining challenges are linked to visibility beyond the UNEP/MAP system circle, more effectiveness and efficiency, indicators to monitor progress and advancements.

101. In its second phase of implementation (2016-2025), the MSSD has provided a unique platform for raising sustainable development issues among the priorities of the Mediterranean riparian countries. It has played an important role in raising awareness and strengthening knowledge of environmental issues and their links with the fight against poverty, economic development and improving people's well-being. Through the many projects implemented, technical and policy tools and instruments have been made available to countries to strengthen their capacity for governance of the marine environment. This success should be used to build the next implementation phase of the MSSD focusing on the “action for change and transformation”. The strategy must be simplified, results-oriented, and avoid redundancy and fragmentation into siloed sectoral objectives.

# VI. Annexes

## Annex I, Methodology, including list of information sources and list of stakeholders

### Background and institutional context

The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD 2016-2025) final evaluation was decided by the 20th meeting of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD) (14-16 June 2023) to support the MSSD review process, launched in the biennium 2024-2025.

The MSSD final evaluation builds on the MSSD mid-term evaluation results. The mid-term evaluation was performed in 2019, and highlighted a number of achievements, gaps, challenges, opportunities and recommendations to advance the MSSD implementation during its second phase of implementation (2021-2025). Likewise, the MSSD final evaluation should be aligned with relevant global processes and should make use of the outcomes of the mid-term evaluation of the MSSD, of the MED 2050 Foresight Study, of the State of Environment and Development in Mediterranean (SoED 2020), the MedECC Special Report on Climate and Environmental Coastal Risks, of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report as well as of the results deriving from the population and regular monitoring of the MSSD Dashboard composed of 28 indicators.

At the global level, it should be assessed how the MSSD was and will be aligned with, and contribute to, the implementation of the most recent global and regional commitments and targets, as well as to the relevant policy and cooperation frameworks, initiatives and programs at regional level in order to further enhance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs at Mediterranean level.

### Purpose, scope and users of the MSSD final evaluation

The main approach, objectives and tasks of the MSSD final evaluation have been validated by the 25th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Athens, 18-19 April 2024). The final evaluation should be delivered by November 2024 and should include consultations with relevant stakeholders. The MCSD-SC agreed that the final evaluation provides recommendations to feed the MSSD revision process, in particular related to the alignment of the Strategy with the global and regional frameworks and addressing the thematic and systemic identified gaps. The MSSD final evaluation will cover also the current Flagship Initiatives (FI), indicating potential simplification and/or merging options, while embedding the new FIs.

The MCSD Steering Committee agreed on the set up of the following MSSD Revision Thematic Working Groups (WGs): i) Marine Spatial Planning facilitated; ii) Circular Economy; iii) Ocean Economy/Sustainable Finance, considering also the involvement of youth and women to support the MSSD update. The three working groups will benefit from the MSSD final evaluation findings, while giving feedback to finalize their analysis.

In line with these decisions, the overall objective of MSSD final evaluation is "**to deliver recommendations and some initial elements for the updated MSSD, to the Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development and to the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, that would lead to an ambitious MSSD update in full alignment with the relevant global and regional agendas and cooperation frameworks and support effectively Mediterranean countries to deliver SDGs**", based on the assessment of the status of MSSD as well as the FI implementation at national, sub-regional and regional level, and the identification of the potential thematic gaps.

The updated MSSD will be submitted for endorsement to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, in the framework of next CoP (CoP 24, 2025).

## Methodology

### Analytical framework

Defining the questions is the crucial stage of the evaluation design. Well known evaluation practices[20] of the UN and OECD use criteria to make the process systematic and ensure its comprehensiveness. The evaluation criteria provide a tool for checking from these different perspectives that anything has been missed, for enabling further development and refining of the questions which are essential to the evaluation design. The six evaluation criteria are: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. They ask questions about[21]:

- Relevance: Is the MSDD doing the right things?
- Coherence: How well does the MSSD fit?
- Effectiveness: Is the MSSD achieving its objectives?
- Efficiency: Is the MSSD timely supporting alignment and complementarity of available financial resources and opportunities?
- Impact: At this stage of the MSSD implementation process, this criterion will be used to assess the monitoring and evaluation system defined in the strategy in order to measure its impact after its completion. The generic question is therefore: How can the MSSD monitoring system be improved to take account of new developments?

These basic questions need to be broken down into more specific questions in the light of the overall objective of the final evaluation.

The starting point for the MSSD final evaluation is the results of the MSSD mid-term evaluation, carried out in 2019, in particular the recommendations made following the analysis of the state of implementation of the MSSD. The five challenges identified at that time were adopted by the MSSD stakeholders[22]: Political leadership, Governance and coordination mechanism, Finance, Flagship initiatives (FI), and Monitoring mechanism. They provide recommendations (Table no.1) for strengthening the implementation of the MSSD during its second phase (2020-2025), the achievement of which will be also assessed by the final evaluation.

*Table 1: The mid-term evaluation recommendations to advance the MSSD implementation*

| **Strategic axis MTE** | **MTE Recommendations** |
|---|---|
| Political leadership | MSSD (softly) binding instrument: Use, for example, the complaint or explain approach to increase the pressure on targeted actors / Organization of high-level political summits with head of States, mirroring the HPLF with the VNRs to increase political visibility and empowerment. Annual or biannual stakeholder conferences to disseminate outcomes<br>MSSD monitored at national level through a cross-ministerial level |
| Governance and coordination mechanism | Strengthen the MCSD role in the MSSD implementation by reinforcing its dedication, resources, visibility, and capacity. Better interconnection between the MSSD and other international environmental commitments and regional platform for sustainable development. Identify and strongly support regional actions or cross-sectorial initiatives contributing to several institutional engagements<br>More involvement of private sectors and citizens. The UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention should engage closely with the private sector, in particular in the field of green and blue economy. Regional business actors to become members or partners of the MCSD. Specific communication campaigns should target the private sector |

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- Better Criteria for Better Evaluation - Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use - OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation https://web-archive.oecd.org/2020-09-04/540455-revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund, UN Peace and Development Fund, https://www.un.org/en/unpdf/2030asd

21 Ibid.

22 The results of the mid-term evaluation were submitted, in 2021, to the 19th meeting of the MCSD, to the meeting of the MAP Focal Points and to the CoP22 of the MAP Barcelona Convention

| | |
|---|---|
| Flagship initiatives (FI) | Promote successful FI as good and best practices, and scale-up through adequate funding<br>Need of greater political leadership to make FI an inspiring practice to increase the visibility and achievement of the MSSD<br>FI should be officially captured in the UNEP/MAP monitoring/reporting system |
| Finance | Concentrate the limited available resources to develop the most promising Regional Actions and Flagship Initiatives. Define/identify adequate investment and funding schemes for an effective implementation of the MSSD. Establish a road map, identify public and private financial mechanisms and potential investments sources, as originally planned<br>Design a specific MSSD label and reward the most interesting sustainability initiatives promoted by regional and national stakeholders |
| Monitoring mechanism | Identify and report on all initiatives contributing to the MSSD, at national or local level, through a continuous, transparent and open monitoring process<br>MSSD indicators should be more integrated and aligned with SDGs indicators, to facilitate data collection and avoid reporting fatigue. Improve the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard to become strategically more supportive of the MSSD core objectives |

Taking into account these five dimensions of the MSSD mid-term evaluation, the questions of the final evaluation are formulated as follows with regard to the first five[23] UN and OECD criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Impact?:

- Relevance / Political leadership: Is the MSSD doing the right things?
  - Has the MSSD been used as a lever to guide political decisions on sustainable development, at national level? How?
  - What political support is there, at national and regional level?
  - Integration of Gender, Youths and Minority-Groups?
  - What lessons can be learned to improve the MSSD and flagship initiatives implementation and make them useful for Parties and stakeholders to implement their global and regional commitments?
  - What political support and how to mobilize it, to move from sectoral/silo approaches to horizontal/spatialized thematic?
  - How can multi-level stakeholders be further involved in the MSSD implementation including non-state actors as private sector and financial institutions?
  - How can the involvement of broader stakeholders, outside the UNEP/MAP system, be strengthened?
  - How to make the MSSD the regional framework of sustainable development transversal priority at the national level?
- Coherence / Governance and coordination mechanism:
  - To what extent does the MSSD represent a instrument to concretely support sustainable development at national, regional and international contexts?
  - To what extent, the MSSD is used to implement global commitments at regional and national level?
  - To what extent, the MSSD is referenced as a regional commitment, by Partners/Donors?
  - What elements need to be modified or added in order to revise the strategy, without extensive changes, so that it will be fully aligned with the global and regional commitments?
  - Which synergies can be concretely developed with regional and sub-regional cooperation frameworks and initiatives, for example via the flagship initiatives?
- Effectiveness:
  - What are the achievements, best practices and successes (MSSD Objectives / Strategic directions / Actions / Concrete actions to achieve SDGs, in particular, SDG-14, SDG-11, SDG-13, SDG-7, SDG-15, SDG-12, SDG-16, SDG-17 / FI results and outcomes)

[23] "Sustainability" criteria is not appropriate in regard to the evaluation scope and the questions that the evaluation is seeking to answer.

    - What are the emerging priorities at regional and national level, in the light of global commitments and frameworks?
    - Which are the potential thematic gaps of the MSSD? (i.e. role of MSP, blue/green finance, role of research and innovation towards sustainability, ocean literacy, etc.)
    - How can successful initiatives be promoted and scaled-up through appropriate funding?
    - How can the flagship initiatives be better linked to the MSSD's strategic orientations, in order to become inspiring practices that increase the MSSD's visibility and achievements?
    - Is there the need to prioritize the MSSD objectives?
- Efficiency / Finances:
    - Is the MSSD a lever for mobilizing funding for sustainable development in the Mediterranean region?
    - Is the MSSD used by donors to frame their criteria for funding projects and programs?
    - How can we ensure the effective mobilization of resources??
    - Is the funding alignment process the MSSD can support synergetic enough with relevant regional frameworks and cooperation initiatives?
- Impact:
    - How can the MSSD monitoring system be improved to take account of new developments?
    - To what extent do the strategic orientations correspond to the functionalities of the Dashboard / the number of indicators?
    - How can the indicators for monitoring the implementation of flagship initiatives be harmonized with those of the MSD? How can flagship initiatives be better aligned with the strategic directions of the MSSD?
    - How can the implementation of the MSSD be better monitored at national level, without increasing the reporting burden on countries?
    - How to strengthen the Science/Policy Interface?

To answer these sets of questions, the MSSD final evaluation will combine different tools to deliver a comprehensive evaluation, both qualitative and quantitative.

**Quantitative evaluation and its use in qualitative assessment**

The quantitative evaluation is based on the Plan Bleu Dashboard report which has been finalized in June 2024. Indeed, and as a part of the MSSD final evaluation, in January 2024, Plan Bleu/RAC started a quantitative evaluation to inform about the evolution and state of sustainable development at the regional scale. The work is based on the monitoring and assessment of the MSSD dashboard and its compendium of 28 indicators, not only from the last update in 2023, but over the last ten years period (2015-2024).[24] **Figures and facts resulting from the dashboard analysis will be instrumental to provide evidence and arguments for the qualitative assessment. They will be used to update the assessment made by the mid-term evaluation strategic objective by strategic objective, including actions and flagship initiatives (see Annex 3).**

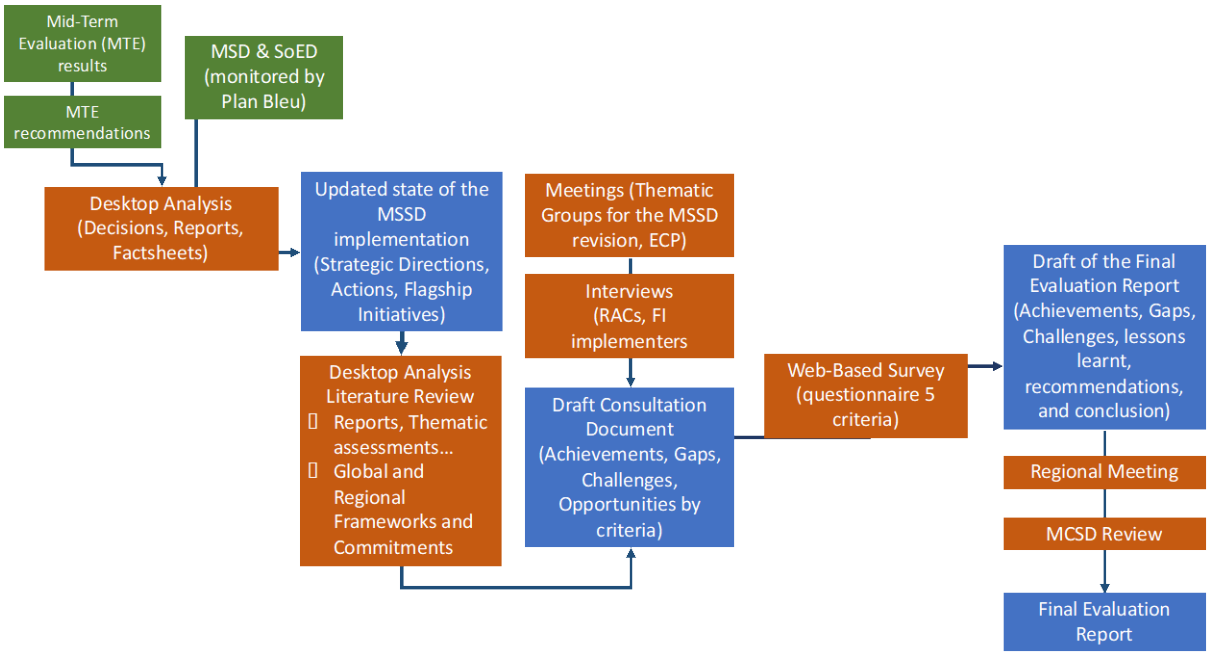
The qualitative evaluation entails desktop analysis and literature review as well as stakeholders' consultations. The starting point is the results and recommendations of the mid-term evaluation (MTE) achieved in 2020. The final report of the mid-term evaluation highlighted main achievements and gaps of the MSSD implementation. It provides the overall progress and state of implementation of the MSSD. A particular focus was placed towards Regional Actions, Flagship Initiatives and Targets to be delivered by, before or near the year 2020.

The state of implementation of the MSSD will be analyzed against the five criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and impact and sustainability) in order to identify gaps and

[24] UNEP/MED WG.586/3 - 25th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee - Athens, Greece, 18-19 April 2024- Agenda item 3: Report by the Coordinator on Sustainable Development Activities for the Period June 2023 – March 2024- Agenda item 4: Implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) - Agenda item 5: Specific Issues

opportunities for improvement in the implementation of the MSSD. The outcome of this stage is the consultation document that will be used to develop the questionnaire for the online survey, which will mobilize a large number of stakeholders, thanks to the involvement of UNEP/MAP partners and networks. Inputs from the consultation step will be instrumental to finalize the MSSD final evaluation reports, including recommendations for the MSSD revision.

*Table 3: Diagram of the methodology*




**Literature review**

The literature review covers several types of documents (see Annex 1: List of information sources) to provide answers to the evaluation questions.

This desktop analysis includes:

- The review of the MSSD will include RACs publications, data sheets and reports – Flagship initiatives' Reports and Websites that will be instrumental to update the mid-term evaluation outputs, identifying the main achievements during the last two years as well as thematic gaps in the MSSD implementation.
- The national level of MSSD implementation is addressed through the review of national/governmental available documents[25] to identify general trends in the implementation of the SDGs and the priorities defined by countries. The captured data will be completed by the data gathered via the questionnaire.
- The complementary review of scientific and academic publications will allow identifying the state of the art and knowledge on issues related to sustainable development in the Mediterranean region (adaptation to climate change, Marine Spatial Planning, Circular Economy, Ocean Economy/Sustainable Finance…) as well as good practices and successful actions. This will also identify ways of strengthening the implementation of Flagship initiatives and up-scaling them with the appropriate resources.
- While the new frameworks, processes and developments at the global and regional level make it possible to identify the new elements that will need to be taken into account to update the MSSD, in regard to identified gaps.

[25] National Voluntary Review, National Determined Contribution, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, etc.

*Table 4: The final evaluation framework*

| The Final Evaluation questions<br>Analysis Dimensions | Updated state of MSSD & FI implementation | Best Practices / Successes | Gaps Challenges | Lessons to be learnt | Recommendations for MSSD revision | Dashboard Indicators & Conclusion of the PB analysis, for evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Relevance / Policial Leadership** | ▪ Has the MSSD been used as a lever to guide political decisions on sustainable development, at national level? How?<br>▪ What political support is there, at national and regional level, for Mediterranean and coastal issues?<br>▪ Integration of Gender, Youths and Minority-Groups? | Identified by the literature review and supplemented by data gathered during the stakeholder consultation.<br>▪ What lessons can be learned to improve the MSSD and flagship initiatives implementation and make them useful for Parties and stakeholders to implement their global and regional commitments? | | | ▪ What political support and how to mobilize it, to move from sectoral/silo approaches to horizontal/spatialized thematic?<br>▪ How can multi-level stakeholders be further involved in the MSSD implementation including non-state actors as private sector and financial institutions?<br>▪ How can the involvement of broader stakeholders, outside the UNEP/MAP system, be strengthened?<br>▪ How to make the MSSD the regional framework of sustainable development transversal priority at the national level? | Indicator 6<br>Indicator 24 |
| **Coherence / Governance & Coordination Mechanism** | ▪ **To what extent does the MSSD represent a instrument to concretely support sustainable development at national, regional and international contexts?**<br>▪ **To what extent, the MSSD is used to implement global commitments at regional and national level?**<br>▪ **To what extent, the MSSD is referenced as a regional commitment, by Partners/Donors?** | | | | ▪ What elements need to be modified or added in order to revise the strategy, without extensive changes, so that it will be fully aligned with the global and regional commitments?<br>▪ Which synergies can be concretely developed with regional and sub-regional cooperation frameworks and initiatives, for example via the flagship initiatives? | |
| **Effectiveness / (RACs, Strategic Directions / Actions / Flagship Initiatives, Networks)** | ▪ What are the achievements, best practices and successes of:<br>o MSSD Objectives / Strategic directions / Actions /<br>o Concrete actions to achieve SDGs, in particular, SDG-14, SDG-11, SDG-13, SDG-7, SDG-15, SDG-12, SDG-16, SDG-17 /<br>o FI results and outcomes<br>▪ | | | | ▪ What are the emerging priorities at regional and national level, in the light of global commitments and frameworks?<br>▪ Which are the potential thematic gaps of the MSSD? (i.e. role of MSP, blue/green finance, role of research and innovation towards sustainability, ocean literacy, etc.)<br>▪ How can successful initiatives be promoted and scaled-up through appropriate funding?<br>▪ How can the flagship initiatives be better linked to the MSSD's strategic orientations, in order to | Indicator 7 (14.5.1)<br>Indicator 8a – 8b (14.4.1)<br>Indicator 10 (15.a.1)<br>Indicator 12 (6.4.2)<br>Indicator 14 (6.1.1)<br>Indicator 15 (6.2.1)<br>Indicator 17a–17b (15.5.1)<br>Indicator 18a (11.1.1)<br>Indicator 20 (11.6.1)<br>Indicator 22a (7.3.1)<br>Indicator 22b (7.2.1) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | become inspiring practices that increase the MSSD's visibility and achievements?<br>▪ Is there the need to prioritize the MSSD objectives? | Indicator 23a-23b (8.4.2)<br>Indicator 27 (16.10.2)<br>Etc. |
| **Efficiency / Finance** | ▪ Is the MSSD a lever for mobilizing funding for sustainable development in the Mediterranean region?<br>▪ Is the MSSD used by donors to frame their criteria for funding projects and programs? | | ▪ How can we ensure the effective mobilization of resources?<br>▪ Is the funding alignment process the MSSD can support synergetic enough with relevant regional frameworks and cooperation initiatives? | Plan Bleu Study on Finance and climate change |
| **Impact / Monitoring & Evaluation** | ▪ How can the MSSD monitoring system be improved to take account of new developments?<br><br>To what extent do the strategic orientations correspond to the functionalities of the Dashboard / the number of indicators? | | ▪ How can the indicators for monitoring the implementation of flagship initiatives be harmonized with those of the MSD?<br>▪ How can flagship initiatives be better aligned with the strategic directions of the MSSD?<br>▪ How can the implementation of the MSSD be monitored at national level, without increasing the reporting burden on countries?<br>▪ How to strengthen the Science/Policy Interface? | Chapter III: Dashboard Sustainability<br><br>Proposed eight core indicators / Alignment with MEA/Global set of indicators |

**Draft table of contents of the MSSD final evaluation report**

The final evaluation report will contain the following parts:

- An executive summary
- Introduction / Background of the final evaluation
- A profile of the MSSD
- A description of the evaluation method used and its limitations
- Update of MTE results and recommendations (based on the tabs in chapter 4.3 of the MTE report 'State of implementation of the MSSD')
- Main findings in relation to the five adopted criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact
- Lessons learnt and good practices
- Recommendations and elements for the updated MSSD, including the proposal for the updated MSSD structure
- Conclusion
- Annexes including ToRof the MSSD final evaluation, Data collection tools, List of documents reviewed, List of main regional and international frameworks and commitments, List of Respondents interviewed, etc.

**List of information sources**

**UNEP/MAP Decisions and reports**

- UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.441/3 - Report by the Secretariat on Work Carried Out and Progress in the Implementation of Recommendations of the 16th Meeting of the MCSD - Progress Report on Work Carried Out since the 16th Meeting of the MCSD
- UNEP/MAP WG.560/4 – Outcome of the MED 2050 Foresight Study (20th Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, Marseille, France, 14-16 June 2023)
- UNEP/MAP WG.560/6 – Report of the 20th meeting of the MCSD, Marseille, France, 14-16 June 2023
- UNEP/MAP WG.560/Inf.3 – Mediterranean sustainability and SCP dashboard including the update of the sustainable consumption and production indicators by MedWaves SCP/RAC
- UNEP/MED WG.469/3 - Progress Report on the Work Done after the 17th Meeting of the MCSD Progress Report on the Work Done after the 17th Meeting of the MCSD
- UNEP/MED WG.493/3 - Progress Report for the Period June 2019 – April 2021 and Specific Issues
- UNEP/MED WG.493/5 - Implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) - Mid-Term Evaluation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) – Draft Final Report
- UNEP/MED WG.493/Inf.6 - Implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) MSSD Reporting Table – Focus on Targets and Flagship Initiatives (March 2021)
- UNEP/MED WG.560/Inf4 – Update on Flagship initiatives and activities towards the implementation of the MSSD (20th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee, 14-16 June 2023)
- UNEP/MED WG.568/20 - Report of the Meeting of the Meeting of the MAP Focal Points Istanbul, Türkiye, 12-15 September 2023
- UNEP/MED WG.586/3 - Progress Report and Specific Issues (25th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Athens, Greece, 18-19 April 2024))
- UNEP/MED WG.586/3/Add.1 - Progress Report and Specific Issues - Addendum 1 (25th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Athens, Greece, 18-19 April 2024))

- UNEP/MED WG.586/4 - Draft Terms of Reference of the Thematic Working Groups of Experts for the revision of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) (25th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Athens, Greece, 18-19 April 2024))
- UNEP/MED WG.586/Inf.3 - Reports of the meetings of the extended Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (25th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Athens, Greece, 18-19 April 2024))
- UNEP/MED WG.586/Inf.4 – Specific issues (25th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Athens, Greece, 18-19 April 2024))
- UNEP/MED WG.586/Inf.5 - Strengthening the systemic governance of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) (25th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Athens, Greece, 18-19 April 2024))
- UNEP/MED WG.586/Inf.6 - Proposed New Flagship Initiatives (25th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Athens, Greece, 18-19 April 2024))
- The 2020 edition of the State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean (SoED) https://www.unep.org/unepmap/resources/2020-edition-state-environment-and-development-mediterranean-soed
- MedECC MAR1 – Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean https://www.unep.org/unepmap/resources/medecc-mar1-climate-and-environmental-change-mediterranean
- Simplified peer review mechanism report (SIMPEER) https://planbleu.org/en/publications/report-simpeer-simplified-peer-review-mechanism-of-sustainable-development-strategies-in-mediterranean-countries/
- Implementing SDG 12 in the Mediterranean, series of facsheets https://www.switchtogreen.eu/implementing-sdg-12-in-the-mediterranean/

23rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols (Portorož, Slovenia, 5-8 December 2023)

- UNEP/MED IG.26/22* - Report of the Meeting 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 and its Protocols
- UNEP/MED IG.26/21 – CoP-23 Portoroz Ministerial Declaration
- Decision IG.25/1 - UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2027
- Decision IG.26/3 - The 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report and a Renewed Ecosystem Approach Policy in the Mediterranean

United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme - Sixth session Nairobi, 26 February–1 March 2024

- UNEP/EA.6/L.12 - Draft resolution on the sound management of chemicals and waste
- UNEP/EA.6/L.17 - Draft resolution on strengthening international efforts to combat desertification and land degradation, restore degraded land, promote land conservation and sustainable land management, contribute to land degradation neutrality and enhance drought resilience
- UNEP/EA.6/L.16 - Draft resolution on effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution

- UNEP/EA.6/L.18 - Strengthening Ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution
- 
- UNEP/EA.6/HLS/L.1 - Draft ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session - Effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution

**Indicators**

- Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, https://wesr.unep.org/article/dashboard
- Monitoring progress on the Regional Action Plan on SCP in the Mediterranean https://switchmed.eu/policy/monitoring-progress-on-the-regional-action-plan-on-scp-in-the-mediterranean/

**Others**

- ISSD, Earth Negotiations Bulletin, Vol.16 No.176 - Summary of the Sixth Session of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the United Nations Environment Assembly- 19 February – 1 March 202

**UN, governmental and other IGOs publications**

- Sustainable development goals report, 2023, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/
- Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean, Report 2020, Transformations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals https://sdsn-mediterranean.unisi.it//wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2020/11/MED_SDG2020-def_compressed.pdf
- Measuring Progress: Environment and the SDGs, 2021, https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/measuring-progress-environment-and-sdgs
- Sustainable development in the Mediterranean region, Rapporteur: Lidija Pavić-Rogošić, REX/526 Sustainable development in the Mediterranean region, PRELIMINARY DRAFT INFORMATION REPORT, Section for External Relations https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/eesc-2020-01279-00-00-apri-tra-en.pdf
- TOWARDS 2030: AGENDA FOR A GREENER MED - Contributing to Achieving the Environmental SDGs in the Mediterranean - (2030GreenerMed) https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/220304-Presentación_Final_Light.pdf
- A Sustainable Blue Economy for the Mediterranean: Challenges, Opportunities and Policy Pathways, eco-union, 2024, https://www.ecounion.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Policy-Report-39-Blue-economy.pdf

**Academic and Grey Literature**

- Mélanie Requier-Desjardins, CIHEAM Dorian Kalamvrezos Navarro, FAO - The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean https://www.iamm.ciheam.org/uploads/attachments/446/08_Mediterra2016_EN.pdf
- Cramer, W., Guiot, J., Fader, M. et al. Climate change and interconnected risks to sustainable development in the Mediterranean. Nature Climate Change 8, 972–980 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-018-0299-2
- Selecting indicators for measuring progress towards sustainable development goals at the global, national and corporate levels https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352550923002786

- Tracking on food and agriculture-related SDG indicators in the Mediterranean region, Pier Paolo Miglietta, Benedetta Coluccia, Mattia Andrea Pacifico, Giulio Malorgio, 2023, https://newmedit.iamb.it/bup/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/04-Tracking-on-food.pdf
- Integrating the ocean into the climate regime: Future prospects, Julien Rochette (IDDRI), Marine Lecerf (Ocean and Climate Platform), Matthieu Wemaëre (IDDRI), Loreley Picourt (Ocean and Climate Platform) https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/PDF/Publications/Catalogue%20Iddri/Décryptage/202406-IB0424-ocean%20climate_0.pdf
- 2024, une année charnière pour la coopération internationale sur le développement durable, Céline Kauffman (IDDRI), Léna Spinazé (IDDRI), https://www.iddri.org/fr/publications-et-evenements/billet-de-blog/2024-une-annee-charniere-pour-la-cooperation
- Charting the course: Elements of a roadmap for achieving the 30x30 target in the Ocean, Julien Rochette (IDDRI), Timothée Cook (BlueSeeds), Margaux Janin (BlueSeeds), Marie-Aude Sévin (BlueSeeds), https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/PDF/Publications/Catalogue%20Iddri/Décryptage/202406-IB0524-30x30_0.pdf

**National Publications**

- Voluntary national reviews, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/
- Nationally Determined Contribution https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs
- National Strategy for Sustainable Development (available on the web)
- National Strategy for Ecological Transition (available on the web)
- National Strategy for Energy Transition (available on the web)
- National Strategy for Circular Economy / Green Economy / Blue Economy (available on the web)

**Relevant regional and international frameworks and commitments**[26]
At global level the following commitments and frameworks are of relevance for the MSSD revision:

- Main outcomes and commitments of the second UN Ocean Conference held in Lisbon in June 2022 , in particular the raised priorities on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from international maritime transportation, especially shipping; strengthen the science-policy interface for implementing Goal 14; explore, develop and promote innovative financing solutions to drive the transformation to sustainable ocean-based economies, and the scaling up of nature - based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches
- 2022 Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) in particular its target 3 calling to ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed
- COP27 on Climate Change limits the warming to around 1.5°C which requires global greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced by 43% by 2030
- COP28 Declaration on climate and health has been one of those signed by the highest number of Countries: 143 Courtiers, out of which 15 are Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, and second only to the Declaration on agriculture food and climate , signed by 159 Courtiers, 18 of which are Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention

[26] UNEP/MED WG.586/Inf.4 – 18 March 2024

- COP28 Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP) for Climate Action to enhance cooperation, where applicable and appropriate, with subnational governments in the planning, financing, implementation, and monitoring of climate strategies
- COPs/UNCCD invites Parties to strengthen their commitments to achieve national Land Degradation Neutrality targets by 2030
- Negotiations on the UN global treaty to end plastic pollution that are planned to be finalized by the end of 2024
- 2023 Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) now open for signature
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 76/296 of July 2022 "Our Ocean, Our Future, Our Responsibility", which highlights that its goals can also be successfully applied at the regional level through raising awareness and increased cooperation at regional and sub-regional level
- Resolution of the Sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme on Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution that, among the others, invites Member States to scale up means of implementation to enhance the capacity to deliver on ocean related sustainable development goals and implement the relevant conventions; and calls for continued cooperation and coordination on marine issues among all relevant global and regional forums and organizations in order to deliver coherently on Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other relevant ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals and their targets
- Global Framework on chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste
- The SDG Report 2023, in particular the highlighted five key areas for urgent action on 1. recommit to seven years of accelerated, sustained and transformative action, both nationally and internationally; 2. advance concrete, integrated and targeted policies and actions to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and end the war on nature, with a focus on advancing the rights of women and girls; 3. strengthen national and subnational capacity to deliver Sustainable Development Goals; 4. recommit at the SDG Summit to deliver on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and to mobilize the resources; 5. facilitate the continued strengthening of the United Nations development system and boost the capacity of the multilateral system to tackle emerging challenges and address Sustainable Development Goals-related gaps and weaknesses.

At regional level a number of policy and cooperation frameworks, initiatives and programmes are complementary to the global ones and of relevance for the MSSD revision:

- The European Green Deal as overall framework, including within the EU Neighbourhood and Enlargement policy, and the February 2024 Recommendations for 2040 target to reach climate neutrality by 2050 and which indicates which are the building blocks to reach the objective, some of which could be easily envisaged as potential new flagship initiatives of the MSSD, or key elements for the revision of the current ones: 1. resilient and decarbonised energy system for buildings, transport and industry; 2. effective agricultural policies; 3 EU climate diplomacy and partnerships; 4. Climate policy as an investment policy; 5. Fairness, solidarity and social policies at the core of the transition; 6. Infrastructure to deliver and to transport and store hydrogen and CO2; 7. A competitive industrial revolution based on resource efficiency, decarbonisation and clean technologies.

- The 2021 EC Communication on a Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood that includes priorities including Green transition: climate change resilience, energy and environment
- The 2022 EC report on the implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning Directive
- The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) 2021 Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy and the 2021 Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Action.
- The Sea basin cooperation framework WestMed Initiative for the development of sustainable blue economy among Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia for a sustainable blue economy in the Western part of the Mediterranean
- The macro regional cooperation framework EUSAIR for the sustainable development of the Ionian Adriatic sub region, specifically among Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, San Marino, Serbia and Slovenia
- The EC Ocean Mission and its lighthouse projects in the Mediterranean, focusing marine litter, blue ports, biodiversity
- In complement transnational cooperation programmes in the Mediterranean, Interreg Programmes 2021-2027 Euro-Med, Next Med and Adrion, finance translational projects on coastal and marine environment, as well as blue economy, circular economy and climate change, PRIMA Programme, etc.

**List of stakeholders**
A list of existing stakeholders of UNEP/MAP system is detailed below, based on the information provided by the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit in June 2024

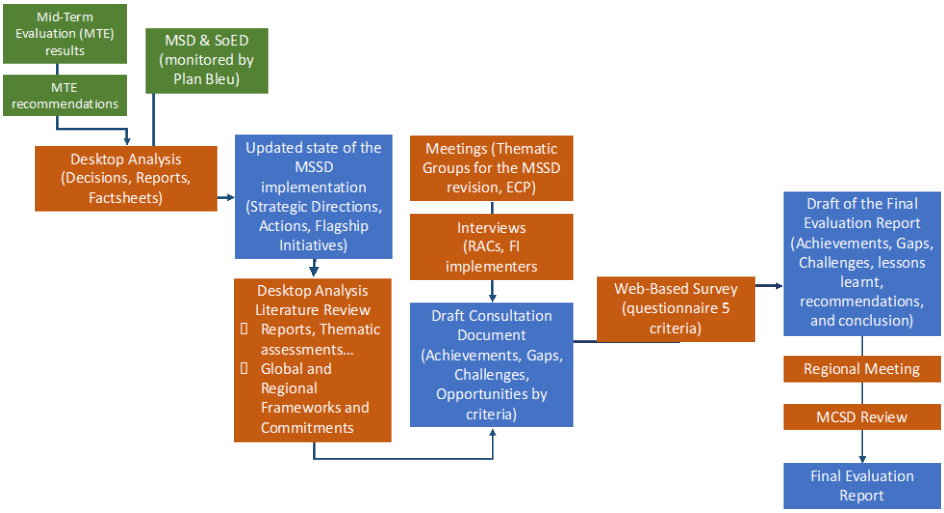
- UNEP/MAP Components/Regional Activity Centres (RACs)
- MCSD Members and Observers
- MAP Partners
- Other stakeholders, outside the UNEP/MAP circle
  - West Med Initiative
  - EUSAIR Macro regional Strategy
  - INTERREG EURO MED Programme
  - INTERREG NEXT (SOUTH) MED Programme

## Annex II, Stakeholders' Consultation approach and questionnaire

### Objective of the stakeholders' consultation

As part of the MSSD Final Evaluation (MFE), this inclusive **consultation process** aims at collecting comments, opinions and proposals from relevant stakeholders involved in the **Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)** 2016-2025 implementation.

*Table 10: The MSSD final evaluation methodology*




The overall objective of the final evaluation aims to provide recommendations "**(…) that would lead to an ambitious MSSD update in full alignment with the relevant global agendas and support effectively Mediterranean countries to deliver SDGs"**.

The final evaluation methodology is based on the well-known evaluation practices of the UN and OECD. The five evaluation criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Impact are selected for enabling further development and refining of the assessment questions to be answered in light of the overall objective of the final evaluation. The set of questions related to each of the five criteria were finalized with the UNEP/MAP Coordination Unit support, in regard to the overall objective of the final evaluation and the expectations of stakeholders.

### Stakeholders' consultation process and approach

The final evaluation of the MSSD is an open and participatory process and the result of a collective effort. It includes two parts:

1. **Interviews**: The purpose of the RACs and FI implementers' consultations is to validate the conclusions drawn from the desktop analysis and the dashboard qualitative evaluation results, elaborated on the five evaluation criteria, including lessons learnt and thematic gaps. The UNEP/MAP Coordination Unit, Plan Bleu/RAC, SCP/RAC-MedWaves and PAP/RAC and SPA/RAC provide information to the consultant in the framework of her evaluation and consultation activities. Interviews will be conducted to collect the views of the RACs and those responsible for the implementation of the FI.
2. **Online survey**: A consultation document is elaborated to constitute the background of the online survey consultation. The questionnaire will be completed after the desk-review and finalized with the support of the UNEP/MAP Secretariat Unit and the Plan Bleu.

The indicative timeline for the stakeholders' consultation is:

- **25/06/2024**: Finalization of the MSSD final evaluation questions after review by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat Unit and the Plan Bleu/RAC
- **July – October 2024:** Interviews RACs and FIs' implementers

- **Early September 2024**: ECP Meeting
- **September - October 2024**: Regional stakeholders

**Overview of the MSSD 2015-2026**

The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) follows a structure based on six objectives, embedding environmental aspects within socio-economic dimension, therefore promoting an integrated approach. A set of strategic directions is formulated for each of the six objectives. The strategic directions are complemented by national and regional actions as well as flagship initiatives. Five out six strategic directions have defined targets that are linked to those of the SDGs. Objective no.4 related to climate change has no target. Each action is accompanied by one or more indicators.

The MSSD contributes to the regional sustainability agenda and influences practices on the field; it is recognized by UNEP/MAP stakeholders as a driver to reach the 2030 Agenda in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development has an essential role as a multi-stakeholder platform to discuss, monitor and advance on the implementation of the MSSD and to accelerate knowledge sharing and dissemination of good practices among Country Parties (CPs) and UNEP/MAP Partners.

*Table 11: The MSSD Structure and links with SDGs*

| Objectives and linked SDGs | Strategic Directions | Targets | | Actions | | Flagship Initiatives | Indicators | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | MSSD | SDG | National | Regional | | MSSD | MSSD Dashboard |
| 1. Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas - **SDG 14** | SD1.1: Barcelona Convention' Implementation/Compliance | 1 | SDG 14.5 | 7 | 2 | 1 (MedFund) | 10 | no.6 & 7 |
| | SD1.2: Regulatory mechanisms/Maritime spatial planning, prevent /Control open ocean resource exploitation | 1 | SDG14.4 | 5 | 2 | | 8 | no.8 |
| 2. Promoting resource management, food production and food security through sustainable forms of rural development **SDG 2 - SDG 15 - SDG 6** | | | SDG 15.5 | | | | | no. 11 & no.10 |
| | SD2.1: Sustainable use, management and conservation of Natural Resources & Ecosystems | 1 | SDG 6.1.1 SDG 6.2.1 | 8 | 1 | | | no.12, 13, 14 and 15 |
| | SD2.2: Conservation, use of indigenous or traditional plant varieties and domestic animal breeds | | | 3 | 1 | | 4 | |
| | SD2.3: Networks of ecological protected areas | | | 3 | 1 | 1 (IUCN Green List) | 5 | no.9 |
| | SD2.4: Inclusive, sustainable rural development | | | 3 | 1 | | 4 | |
| | SD2.5:Access of local producers to market | | | 3 | 0 | | | no.16 |
| 3. Planning and managing sustainable Mediterraean Cities - **SDG 11 - SDG 7** | | | SDG 11.3 SDG 12.5 | | | | | |
| | SD3.1: Holistic and spatial planning processes and other related instruments | | | 4 | 4 | 1 (Istanbul Awards) | 11 | |
| | SD3.2: Inclusive urbanization and strenghen capacities | 1 | | 3 | 1 | 1 (ToolBox) | 8 | no.18 |
| | SD3.3: Protection, rehabilitation of historic urban areas | | | 4 | 1 | | 5 | no.19 |
| | SD3.4: Sustainable waste management / circular economy | 1 | | 3 | 1 | 1 (Regional Assessment to achieve waste | 5 | no. 20 |
| | SD3.5: Urban spatial patterns | | | 3 | 1 | | 5 | |
| | SD3.6: Green buildings | | | 1 | 1 | | 2 | |
| | SD3.7: Urban resilience / Reduce vulnerability to risks and hasards | | | 4 | 1 | | 5 | |
| 4. Addressing climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterraean - **SDG 13** | SD4.1: Scientific knowledge/awereness/technical capacities | | | 4 | 4 | 1 (MedECC) | 13 | no.21 - no.26 |
| | SD4.2: Climate smart and climate resilient responses | | | 1 | 4 | | 5 | |
| | SD4.3: Leverage existing and emerging climate finance mechanisms | | | 2 | 1 | | 3 | |
| | SD4.4: Institutional, policy, legal reforms for effective mainstreaming of climate change responses | | | 6 | 2 | | 10 | no.22 |
| 5. Transition towards a green and blue economy - **SDG 8 - SDG 9 - SDG 12** | SD5.1: Green and decent jobs for all | | | 3 | 1 | | 4 | |
| | SD5.2: Definition and measurement of development, progress and well-being | | | 1 | 1 | | 2 | |
| | SD5.3: Sustainable consumption and production patterns | | | 2 | 1 | | 3 | no.23 |
| | SD5.4: Environmentally-friendly and social innovation | | | 3 | 1 | 1(WeMed Green Business Award) | 6 | |
| | SD5.5: Sustainability principles and criteria into decision-making and public and private investment | | | 2 | 2 | | 4 | |
| | SD5.6: Greener and more inclusive market | 1 | | 2 | 2 | 1 (The integration of sustainability principles into public procurement) | 5 | |
| 6. Improving governance in support od sustainable development - **SDG 16/ - SDG 17** | SD6.1: Regional, sub-regional and cross border dialogue and cooperation | | | 1 | 2 | | 3 | |
| | SD6.2: Engagement of civil society, scientists, local communities and other stkh. | 1 | | 2 | 0 | 1 (Aarhus Convention) | 3 | no.27 |
| | SD6.3: Implementation/Compliance with environmental obligations and agreements | | | 4 | 0 | 1 (Capacity building programmes on the implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and | 4 | |
| | SD6.4: Education and research for SD | | | 4 | 2 | | 5 | no. 24 & 28 |
| | SD6.5: Regional capabilities for information management | | | 2 | 2 | 1(Dashboard) | 4 | |
| | | | | | | | | 5 (General Indicators, no.1 to 5) +2 indicators not directly related to an Objective or a SD (no.17 and 25) |
| **Total** | **29** | **7** | | **93** | **43** | **11** | **146** | **28** |

**Overview of the MSSD state of implementation**

**Objectives**

**The state of implementation of the MSSD Objectives is stable, if compared to 2019 Mid-Term assessment, with a positive trend for Objective 4 on Addressing climate change as a priority.**

- ✓ None of the six MSSD objectives are fully achieved, despite numerous realizations
- ✓ Mediterranean countries as a whole are lagging behind in achieving the SDGs
- ✓ Positive trends on several SDGs across the region that can be built on to support revised MSSD implementation
- ✓ There is a growing understanding in the region on the linkages between stability and sustainable development, but also on integrating the SDGs into development planning and sectoral reform processes

**Regional Actions**

A wide number of innovative projects, initiatives and programmes (SwitchMed, Horizon Research Programmes, WES, PRIMA, WestMed, ClimaMed, etc.) are contributing to the implementation of the Regional actions. Paradoxically, where projects are implemented to carry out regional actions, the rate of progress of the related objective does not exceed 50%. This is mainly because:

- ✓ The projects are not always covering all the Mediterranean countries
- ✓ The Results still need to be upscaled to other Mediterranean regions and countries to lead to transformative change

**Flagship Initiatives**

**The Flagship Initiatives implementation is in good progress:**

- ✓ 6 out of 11 FIs are fully achieved
- ✓ one is at 75%
- ✓ 2 are at 50%

Some key elements for successful FIs can be already highlighted:

- ✓ Implementing agency to be clearly identified
- ✓ Good visibility and engagement among stakeholders at national and local level
- ✓ Designed in close partnership with stakeholders, countries, donors, etc
- ✓ Remaining challenge: Direct link with MSSD regional actions or targets

**Targets**

**None of the seven MSSD targets are achieved. Indeed, the Mediterranean countries as a whole are lagging behind in achieving the 17 SDGs. Mediterranean countries are not on track to achieve the agreed upon goals, including the SDGs and the Ecological Objective for Good Environmental Status of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast. The majority of observed trends show developments that are either progressing towards the set targets, but at an insufficient rate or unequally across countries, or moving away from targets. Particular challenges remaining in achieving SDG-14 "Life below water" and SDG-15 "Life on Land" which are in particular interest for MSSD's Objective 1 and Objective 2.**

- ✓ One out seven targets is achieved at 50%:
  - o Target 1.1, By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on best available scientific information, SDG 14.5: SPA area remains less than 10%, it covers 9% of the Mediterranean through a large variety of conservation design
- ✓ One out seven targets is achieved at 25%
  - o SDG 11.6, By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse – Slow progress, In Mediterranean region the waste generation and management vary widely. In 2019, the range of value is from 1.1 to 1.9 kg/cap/day.
- ✓ Five targets out to seven is not achieved, at 0%

- SDG 14.4.1 By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal and unreported and unregulated fishing
- SDG 15.5.1 Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species, and take further action as needed: The total number if animal species listed in the IUCN red list has increased in all Mediterranean countries from 2018 to 2021
- SDG 11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries – No data
- Target 5.1, By 2025 the majority of Mediterranean countries are committed to green or sustainable public procurement – Few progresses through the MedProgram project in three countries
- Target 6.1, By 2025, two thirds of Mediterranean countries have acceded to the Aarhus Convention - Despite growing awareness of the issue, no non-EU Mediterranean country has yet joined the Convention.

**National Actions**
The MSSD defined a large number of national actions with corresponding indicators. However, no data collection mechanism has been formally put in place to monitor the implementation of these actions. The reports from the countries parties to the Barcelona Convention do not refer to the implementation of the MSSD.

**The final evaluation is considering only the regional level of implementation of the strategy.**

**Issues and structure of the questionnaire**
The questionnaire will be divided in five parts covering the five criteria of the final evaluation. **The questions are open and none is mandatory** so that respondents can choose in which parts they want to answer or develop their reflections according to their knowledge and experience. Basic personal information (country, gender, sector of origin, responsibility) will be collected anonymously to control the diversity and representativeness of participants in the consultation process.
The five parts, tentatively from the same length and duration, are including a short synthesis of the first conclusion gained by the desk-review analysis.

**Relevance - Political leadership**
Up to date, the MSSD is lacking visibility and CPs' policy literature misses the reference to it as strategic framework to plan the implementation of global and regional commitments. Environmental policy remains siloed from core economic and social policy at the national, regional and international level, mainly in non-EU Mediterranean Countries. The link between environmental protection and key social and economic goals – addressing high unemployment, reducing poverty and regional and social inequalities and managing rapid urbanization – is not yet effectively implemented in all countries and at all governance levels.

**Question**
From your point of view:
- **What was particularly lacking in the MSSD to have better visibility and greater political influence at the national level?**
- **How could we address these two challenges (visibility and political support) to improve the relevance of the MSSD?**

**Coherence / Governance and coordination mechanism**
The six objectives of the MSSD cover all commitments and address the priority issues identified by all the global and regional frameworks and commitments adopted from 2015. The MSSD addresses the sustainable development priorities identified by the Mediterranean stakeholders, based on the best available science-based evidence thanks to the relevant reports elaborated by the

UNEP/MAP sytem's bodies (Plan Bleu, Plan Bleu/MedECC, SPA/RAC, REMPEC, PAP/RAC, MedWaves, INFO/RAC).
However, and faced with the multiplicity of objectives, strategic orientations, regional and national actions, which makes their implementation challenging, the MSSD must apply a more integrated approach, prioritize its objectives and seek levers to optimize its action and meet the expectations of stakeholders.

**Questions**

- **How to ensure that the MSSD is the strategic reference framework for the implementation of the SDGs and other global and regional frameworks and commitments?**
- **Which synergies can be concretely developed with regional and sub-regional cooperation frameworks and initiatives?**

**Effectiveness**

The six objectives of the strategy cover all of the emerging priorities in the region (the green and blue economy, integrated maritime management, marine protected areas, etc.). However, the current structure does not give sufficient visibility to these issues and does not adopt the necessary steps to achieve their implementation through synergistic actions. Rather than a gap to fill, it is a question of synthesizing certain strategic directions and providing the strategy with more coherence in the planned actions.
Questions

- **What are the achievements, best practices and successes (MSSD Objectives / Strategic directions / Actions / Concrete actions to achieve SDGs, in particular, SDG-14, SDG-11, SDG-13, SDG-7, SDG-15, SDG-12, SDG-16, SDG-17 / FI results and outcomes)?**
- **What are the emerging priorities at regional and national level, in the light of global commitments and frameworks?**
- **Which are the potential thematic gaps of the MSSD?**
- **How can successful initiatives be promoted and scaled-up through appropriate funding?**

**Efficiency / Finances**

The mid-term evaluation has already concluded that the MSSD is under-financed compared to its ambition. Despite substantial efforts, the implementation, financing and monitoring mechanisms of the MSSD need to be strengthened.
The MSSD financing mechanisms are not properly developed to achieve a timely and effective implementation of the MSSD. No monitoring of MSSD funding has been undertaken (no thematic report nor specific indicators). It remains a major obstacle in advancing towards the MSSD implementation, as adequate finance schemes have been identified as a key driver to reach SDGs.

**Questions**:

- **How to strengthen the National Focal Points capacities to enhance coastal and marine priority in the national sustainable development policy literature?**
- **What kind of investment and funding schemes are needed for an effective implementation of the MSSD?**
- **How to improve the MSSD Partners role for the mobilization of finance and implementing capacities for the MSSD?**
- **Which national support in the non-EU Country Parties to ensure the MSSD reference on the EU green diplomacy negotiation processes?**

**Impact**

The Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard (MSSD-DB) is today complete, 28 indicators are populated and the Plan Bleu has issued a quantitative evaluation for the MSSD implementation period 2016-2025. Nevertheless, the number of MSSD-DB indicators is not well distributed between the different objectives: from one single indicator for Objective 5 (Green and blue economy) up to nine indicators for Objective 2 (Rural areas and Natural resources). This distribution also does not account for the relative importance of objectives. The qualitative as well as quantitative evaluation of Objective 2, with a number of indicators of 9, is the one which is the least achieved, compared to Objective 5 (1 indicator) which counts number of achievements, particularly through SwitchMed program.

In addition, those indicators are also not directly related to the monitoring of MSSD Actions, Targets or Flagships Initiatives. Thus, the 2024 Plan Bleu Report provides a timely and exhaustive picture of **the state of sustainability in the Mediterranean region**. However, it doesn't give an exact picture of **the state of implementation of the Strategy itself** as the MSSD-DB does not cover adequately the level of implementation of the Strategic Directions, Actions, Flagship Activities and Targets.

Questions:

- **Is there a need to distinguish between the MSSD-DB function for monitoring the state of sustainability in the Mediterranean region (impact indicators) and the function for monitoring the implementation of the strategy?**
- **What are prioritized needs of the CPs, in terms of monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs implementation?**
- **How to strengthen the Science/Policy Interface?**