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Athens, Greece, 17 – 19 June 2025

Agenda Item 5: a) Enhanced EcAp Policy and its implementation (GES, Targets, Governance)

Enhanced EcAp Policy and its Implementation

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Note by the Secretariat

In line with Decision IG.26/14 on the Programme of Work and Budget for 2024–2025 (COP 23, 2023), and specifically to the mandate with regards to EcAP Roadmap and IMAP revision, the Secretariat and its MED POL Programme conducted preliminary work and prepared a draft proposal to update the Operational Objectives, IMAP Common Indicators, Good Environmental Status (GES) definitions, and Targets for Ecological Objectives 5 (Eutrophication), 9 (Contaminants), 10 (Marine Litter), and 11 (Noise).

A proposal for EOs 5 and 9 was presented at the online meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Pollution Monitoring (CorMon Pollution) held on 30 January 2025. The meeting agreed to establish an Online Working Group which, as also reflected in the report of the Meeting (WG.602/4) concluded Annex I of the working document WG.602/3, for submission to the MED POL Focal Point meeting in June 2025. After a careful review of the agreed document by the Online Working Group, the Secretariat was of the view that this document may require some minor adjustments to fully reflect the relevant Decisions taken in this respect with regards to some GES targets. To this end, the adjusted GES targets proposal for EOs 5 and 9, as well as the GES targets proposal for EO11, were submitted for review and consideration at the Joint Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Pollution and Marine Litter Monitoring (27–28 May 2025).

The Secretariat also prepared a proposal for updating IMAP EO10 – Marine Litter, which was presented during the CORMON Marine Litter Meeting held online in January 2025. Further to the conclusions of this meeting, the present document further elaborates proposals for GES Definitions and Proposed Targets for the 2 new/updated Common Indicators with the aim to be included in the updated Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Policy. This proposal was submitted for review and endorsement at the Joint Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Pollution and Marine Litter Monitoring (27–28 May 2025).

In addition to the GES-related content for EOs 5, 9, 10 and 11, the present document includes under Annex I the Terms of Reference and Flow of Interaction for the CORMONs and Online Working Groups and Flow of Interaction between Ecosystem Approach and MAP Governing Bodies, with a particular attention on the aspects linked with the CORMON and Component/Thematic Focal Points operations and related content.

At the time of finalizing the documents for the MED POL Focal Points Meeting, the Joint Meeting of the CorMon Pollution - Marine Litter was not yet held. The revised version of this document includes the changes introduced and agreed by this meeting (shown in bold and yellow highlighted text). It is submitted to the MED POL Focal Points Meeting for review and endorsement with a view to its submission to the 12th EcAp Coordination Group and MAP Focal Points Meeting in September 2025.

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1. Implementation of Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme Ecological Objectives 5 and 9

1. The Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Pollution Monitoring (CorMon Pollution), held online on 30 January 2025, agreed to maintain the structure of the 5th Ecological Objective (EO 5) on Eutrophication and the 9th Ecological Objective (EO 9) on Contaminants, as originally established in Decision IG.20/4 “*Implementing MAP ecosystem approach roadmap: Mediterranean Ecological and Operational Objectives, Indicators and Timetable for implementing the ecosystem approach roadmap*” (COP 17, 2012), and Decision IG.22/7: “*Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria*” (COP 19, 2016), and aligned with the earlier framework set out in Decision IG.21/3: “*Ecosystem Approach including adopting definitions of Good Environmental Status (GES) and Targets*” (COP 18, 2013).

2. This conclusion involves retaining the following list of IMAP Common Indicators related to Ecological Objective 5 (EO 5).

Common Indicator 13: Concentration of key nutrients in water column (EO5);

Common Indicator 14: Chlorophyll-a concentration in water column (EO5).

3. This conclusion also involves retaining the following list of IMAP Common Indicators related to Ecological Objective 9 (EO 9).

Common Indicator 17: Concentration of key harmful contaminants measured in the relevant matrix (EO9, related to biota, sediment, seawater);

Common Indicator 18: Level of pollution effects of key contaminants where a cause-and-effect relationship has been established (EO9);

Common Indicator 19: Occurrence, origin (where possible), extent of acute pollution events (e.g. slicks from oil, oil products and hazardous substances), and their impact on biota affected by this pollution (EO9);

Common Indicator 20: Actual levels of contaminants that have been detected and number of contaminants which have exceeded maximum regulatory levels in commonly consumed seafood (EO9);

Common Indicator 21: Percentage of intestinal enterococci concentration measurements within established standards (EO9).

4. This document also presents Operational Objectives, IMAP Common Indicators, and GES Definitions for Ecological Objectives 5 and 9, as established by Decisions IG.20/4, Decision IG.22/7 and Decision IG.21/3. This follows the conclusion of the CorMon Pollution Meeting held on 30 January 2025, which decided not to introduce any changes.

5. Although the CorMon Pollution Meeting held on 30 January 2025 concluded to retain the targets as originally approved by Decision IG.21/3 on the Ecosystem Approach, including definitions of Good Environmental Status (GES) and targets, the present document introduces minor revisions to several targets associated with IMAP Common Indicators 13, 14, 17, 20, and 21, as shown in Table 1 below.

6. These revisions are necessary to ensure consistency between the proposals presented to and approved by the CorMon Pollution Meeting and the ongoing IMAP Pollution revision process, including the revision of the IMAP Guidance Factsheet presented in meeting document UNEP/MED WG.627/6.

7. **The current revisions also include the reinstatement of targets for turbidity, water transparency and dissolved oxygen concentrations, in order to align with the established GES definition for Common Indicator 14 on Chlorophyll-a, as agreed upon in the 2017 MED QSR: “Natural levels of algal biomass, water transparency, and oxygen concentrations in line with prevailing physiographic, geographic, and weather conditions.” Although the Online Working**

Group had recommended the removal of these targets—originally defined in Decision IG.21/3, the present document reconsiders the original GES definitions which identified turbidity, water transparency and dissolved oxygen as supporting parameters in the assessment of GES based on chlorophyll-a concentrations.

7.8. The consistency is necessary to ensure full compatibility between the elements proposed for the IMAP revision and those intended for integration into the Decision on the updated Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) implementation for 2026–2035. This decision is aimed for submission to the 24th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 24) to the Barcelona Convention, scheduled for December 2025.

8.9. The proposed revised targets are aligned with the GES/non-GES classification approved and applied in the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR.

2. Implementation of Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme Ecological Objective 11

9.10. Further to decision of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Pollution Monitoring (30 January, 2025), to maintain the structure of the 5th Ecological Objective (EO 5) on Eutrophication and the 9th Ecological Objective (EO 9) on Contaminants, the present document also proposes to maintain the structure of the 11th Ecological Objective (EO 11) on Energy including underwater noise as originally established in Decision IG.20/4 “*Implementing MAP ecosystem approach roadmap: Mediterranean Ecological and Operational Objectives, Indicators and Timetable for implementing the ecosystem approach roadmap*”, and Decision IG.22/7 : “*Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria*” (COP 19, 2016).

Candidate Common Indicator 26: Proportion of days and geographical distribution where loud, low, and mid-frequency impulsive sounds exceed levels that are likely to entail significant impact on marine animals;

Candidate Common Indicator 27: Levels of continuous low frequency sounds with the use of models as appropriate

10.11. In addition, Table 2 below presents the proposed definitions of Good Environmental Status (GES) and associated targets for IMAP Candidate Common Indicators 26 and 27. These definitions were initially outlined in the Guidance Factsheets acknowledged by the 2019 MED POL Focal Points and have since been revised as part of the ongoing IMAP revision process as detailed in meeting document UNEP/MED WG. 626/5.

11.12. The proposed revised targets are aligned with the GES/non-GES classification approved and applied in the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR.

12.13. This document also proposes that the current CorMon Pollution Meeting endorses the elevation of IMAP Candidate Common Indicators 26 and 27 to IMAP Common Indicators. This recommendation is grounded in the significant progress achieved in underwater noise assessment, culminating in the noise assessment featured in the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR). This advancement builds upon the foundational framework established in the Guidance Factsheet endorsed by the 2019 Meeting of MED POL Focal Points for further elaboration to incorporate evolving scientific knowledge, and the subsequent upgrade as presented in meeting document UNEP/MED WG.626/8.

3. Implementation of Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme Ecological Objective 10

13.14. The Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Marine Litter Monitoring (Online, 29 January 2025) agreed on the following structure of the 10th Ecological Objective (EO10) of IMAP on Marine Litter:

<u>Marine Litter (EO10):</u>	‘Marine and coastal litter do not adversely affect coastal and marine environment.’
Common Indicator 22:	Trends in the amount of litter washed ashore and/or deposited on coastlines (EO10).
Common Indicator 23:	Trends in the amount of litter in the water column including microplastics and on the seafloor (EO10).
<u>Common Indicator 24:</u>	Trends in the amount of litter ingested by marine organisms and in the number of individuals entangled in marine litter Trends in the amount of litter ingested by or entangling marine organisms focusing on selected mammals, marine birds, and marine turtles (EO10).
Common Indicator 2823 (bis) :	Trends in the amount of litter coming from riverine sources (EO10).
Common Indicator 24:	Trends in the amount of litter ingested by or entangling marine organisms focusing on selected mammals, marine birds, and marine turtles (EO10).

14.15. Contracting Parties established national IMAP-based monitoring programmes in relation to Common Indicators 22 and 23 (in particular on beach macro-litter, seafloor macro-litter, and floating microplastics), and have been encouraged to also consider in their monitoring programmes the candidate indicator related to ingestion and entanglement of marine litter from sea turtles and to undertake pilot monitoring activities on the latter. In this regard, a number of countries (e.g., Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco etc.) have piloted the establishment of IMAP-based national monitoring programmes also for IMAP Candidate Indicator 24.

15.16. Furthermore, Data Standards (DS) and Data Dictionaries (DD) have been developed and agreed region-wide for Common Indicators 22 and 23 (i.e., beach macro-litter, seafloor macro-litter, and floating microplastics), including the establishment of Threshold Values (TV) and updated Baseline Values (BV).

16.17. A considerable number of citizens, communities (NGOs, civil society initiatives), and environmental protection associations and institutes across the Mediterranean are already taking part in activities to tackle marine litter. Contracting Parties are encouraged to further engage them in the implementation of IMAP and empower them to help improve the evidence base needed for marine litter monitoring.

17.18. Regarding beach litter, cost-efficient and easy to follow monitoring and sampling methodologies and techniques are well established, as described in the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Guidance, with at least two surveys per year in spring and autumn recommended and ideally 4 surveys per year in spring, summer, autumn and winter.

18.19. An updated list of beach litter categories and related items has been approved at regional level and integrated into the respective DS-DD.

19.20. Further alignment with the EU/MSFD joint list can be considered once this list is finalized and its ongoing update is completed.

20.21. Regarding monitoring of marine litter at the sea (Common Indicator 23), due to the low occurrence of litter in midwater, the common indicator focuses mostly on floating and seafloor litter, including microplastics.

21.22. Regional guidelines detailing the monitoring of floating microplastics have been developed by UNEP/MAP MED POL and agreed at regional level.

22.23. Regarding seafloor macro-litter (Common Indicator 23), opportunistic monitoring is the most cost-efficient method for sea-floor monitoring being jointly implemented with national/regional fish-stock assessment survey programmes (e.g., the Mediterranean International Bottom Trawl Surveys (MEDITS), with the use of compatible professional trawling operations. There may be other opportunities to couple marine litter surveys with other regular surveys (e.g., monitoring in marine reserves passenger ships for visual monitoring, etc.) or programmes on biodiversity, with methodologies and technical requirements prescribed in the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Guidance Document.

23.24. A number of important steps have been also carried also with regards to riverine marine litter and the proposed Common Indicator ~~28~~23 (bis):

- a) The “Guidelines for Monitoring Riverine inputs of Marine Litter” were developed and approved in 2023 (UNEP/MED WG.550/14/Rev.17);
- b) Pilot monitoring has been tested in Israel and Morocco during the implementation of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED II Project (2020-2024); and
- c) The Meeting “Enhancing Interregional Cooperation for Monitoring and Assessing Riverine Input of Marine Litter” was organized jointly with OSPAR, HELCOM and Black Sea Commission in the framework of MARLICE 2024 (Valencia, Spain, 23 May 2024).

24.25. Regarding ingestion and entanglement of marine litter from biota, in particular from sea turtles (i.e., proposed Common Indicator 24), a number of actions have been undertaken by UNEP/MAP, which have been reviewed and endorsed by the CPs, and subsequently have substantially improved the level of knowledge and information for this candidate indicator, including the following: (a) development of a report with the most representative species to be used for this indicator, including a short-listing; (b) region-wide protocols for monitoring interactions between marine litter and marine turtles (ingestion and entangling) with a view to harmonizing methods of data collection for monitoring and assessment; (c) assessment of the available data to propose GES targets; (d) assessment reports from the testing of the harmonized protocols (Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon); (e) operational strategy for monitoring IMAP Candidate Indicator 24; (f) guidelines for the design of a regional network for monitoring & assessment of IMAP Candidate Indicator 24 in the Mediterranean; (g) data standards and data dictionaries and related data flow implemented; (h) pilot IMAP-based national monitoring programmes (Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco).

25.26. Further to the above-stated information, the Secretariat feel that there is sufficient ground to have this candidate common indicator, being transformed into a common indicator and a relevant request from the Contracting Parties should be initiated.

26.27. Furthermore, it is important to note that while micro-litter and in particular microplastics are considered from IMAP-EO10, further work is still necessary at regional level, recognizing that our understanding of the potential impacts of microplastic on organisms and the environment is still under development. Contracting Parties are thus encouraged also to undertake pilots, further research work in this area (e.g., microplastics and mesoplastics on beaches, microplastics on sediment, pellets on beaches etc.).

27,28. The Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Guidance Document, and the Guidance Factsheets include further details and specifications on methodologies, scales of assessment, as well as technical considerations, which can guide the Contracting Parties during the development of their IMAP-based national monitoring programmes for marine litter (IMAP – EO10).

28,29. Table 3 consolidates the list of respective indicators, GES definitions and targets for IMAP EO10, as previously prepared for the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Marine Litter Monitoring (Online, 29 January 2025; WG.601/3), including new elements for the Common Indicator 23 (bis) and Common Indicator 24, highlighted with track changes, is submitted to the Joint Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Pollution and Marine Litter Monitoring (27–28 May 2025) for review and endorsement.

Table 1: Operational Objectives, IMAP Common Indicators, GES Definitions and Revised Targets for Ecological Objectives 5 and 9.

Ecological Objective 5 (EO5):		Human-induced eutrophication is prevented, especially adverse effects thereof, such as losses in biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, harmful algal blooms and oxygen deficiency in bottom waters	
Operational Objective	Indicator	GES	Proposed Revised Targets
5.1 Human introduction of nutrients in the marine environment is not conducive to eutrophication	5.1.1 Concentration of key nutrients in the water column (IMAP Common Indicator 13)	Concentrations of nutrients in the euphotic layer are in line with prevailing physiographic, geographic and climate conditions	State: - Reference nutrients concentrations according to the local hydrological, chemical, and morphological characteristics of the un- impacted marine region. - Decreasing trend of nutrients concentrations in water column of human impacted areas, statistically defined, considering the boundary limit between GES and non-GES classes of the assessment scales. Pressure: - Reduction of BOD emissions from land-based sources. - Reduction of nutrients emissions from land-based sources.
5.2 Direct and indirect effects of nutrient over- enrichment are prevented	5.2.1 Chlorophyll-a concentration in the water column (IMAP Common Indicator 14)	Natural levels of algal biomass, water transparency and oxygen concentrations in line with prevailing physiographic, geographic, and weather conditions	State: - Chlorophyll a concentration in high-risk areas below the boundary limit between GES and non-GES classes of the assessment scales. - Decreasing trend in Chl-a concentrations in high-risk areas affected by human activities. - Index of turbidity below the boundary limit between GES and non-GES classes of the assessment scales to be set upon defining the turbidity assessment criteria¹ behind threshold in high risk areas. - Increasing trend of transparency in areas impacted by human activities²³. - Dissolved oxygen concentrations in high-risk areas below the boundary limit between GES and non-GES classes of the assessment scales to be set upon defining the oxygen concentrations assessment criteria above local threshold³. - Increasing trend in dissolved oxygen concentrations in areas impacted by human activities⁴.

¹ Transferred from Indicator 5.2.2, Decision IG. 21/3, Annex I² [ibidem](#)³ Transferred from Indicator 5.2.3.1, Decision IG. 21/3, Annex I⁴ [ibidem](#)

Ecological Objective 9 (EO9): Contaminants cause no significant impact on coastal and marine ecosystems and human health			
Operational Objective	Indicator	GES	Proposed <u>Revised</u> Targets
9.1 Concentration of priority contaminants is kept within acceptable limits and does not increase	9.1.1 Concentration of key harmful contaminants measured in the relevant matrix (<u>IMAP Common Indicator 17</u>)	Level of pollution is below a determined threshold defined for the area and species.	State: - Concentrations of specific contaminants below either <u>the boundary limit between GES and non-GES classes of the assessment scales -Background Assessment Criteria or Environmental Assessment Criteria (BACs/EACs)</u> or below reference concentrations (from other sources). - No increasing deterioration trends in contaminants concentrations in sediment and biota from human impacted areas, statistically defined. Pressure: - Reduction of contaminants emissions from land-based sources.
9.2 Effects of released contaminants are minimized	9.2.1 Level of pollution effects of key contaminants where a cause-and-effect relationship has been established (<u>Common Indicator 18</u>)	Concentrations of contaminants are not giving rise to negative effects on health status of marine biota acute pollution events	State: - Contaminants effects below thresholds. Pressure: - Decreasing trend in the operational releases of oil and other contaminants from coastal, maritime and offshore activities
9.3 Acute pollution events are prevented, and their impacts are minimized	9.3.1 Occurrence, origin (where possible), and extent of acute pollution events (e.g. slicks from oil, oil products and hazardous substances) and their impact on biota affected by this pollution (<u>Common Indicator 19</u>)	Occurrence of acute pollution events are reduced to the minimum.	Pressure: - Decreasing trend in the occurrences of acute pollution events. - Achieve the elimination of intentional pollution of the marine environment by oil and other harmful and noxious substances (HNS) and the minimization of accidental discharge of such substances.
9.4 Levels of known harmful contaminants in major types of seafood do not exceed established standards.	9.4.1 Actual levels of contaminants that have been detected and number of contaminants which have exceeded maximum regulatory levels in commonly consumed seafood (<u>Common Indicator 20</u>)	Concentrations of contaminants are within the regulatory limits for consumption by humans.	State: - Concentrations of contaminants <u>in foodstuffs</u> are <u>below the UNEP/MAP Environmental Assessment Criteria approved by legislation for the protection of human health, within the regulatory limits set.</u> - Decreasing trend in the frequency of cases of seafood samples above <u>the approved UNEP/MAP Environmental Assessment Criteria regulatory limits for contaminants.</u>
9.5 Water quality in bathing waters and other recreational areas does not undermine human health	9.5.1 Percentage of intestinal enterococci concentration measurements within established standards (<u>IMAP Common Indicator 21</u>)	Concentrations of intestinal enterococci are within established standards	Increasing trend in the <u>percentage of intestinal enterococci concentration measurements that fall in the approved GES categories as established in Decision IG.20/9 and the within established standards (levels of intestinal enterococci comply with established national or international standards, such as EU 2006/7 Directive.)</u>

Table 2: Operational Objectives, IMAP Candidate Common Indicators 26 and 27, GES Definitions and Revised Targets for Ecological Objective 11.

Ecological Objective_11 (EO 11): Noise from human activities causes no significant impact on marine and coastal ecosystems			
Operational Objective	Indicator	GES	Targets
11.1 Energy inputs into the marine, environment, especially noise from, human activities, are minimized ⁵	11.1.1. Proportion of days and geographical distribution where loud, low, and mid-frequency impulsive sounds exceed levels that are likely to entail significant impact on marine animal (<u>Candidate Common Indicator 26</u>) ⁶	<u>Noise from human activities causes no significant impact on marine and coastal ecosystems</u>	State: The extent (%) of days with impulsive sounds sources, their distribution within the year and spatiallyhabitat of noise-sensitive species within the assessment area, are that is impacted by impulsive noise events is below thresholds.
11.2. Energy inputs into the marine, environment, especially noise from, human activities, are minimized	11.2.1. Levels of continuous low frequency sounds with the use of models as appropriate (<u>Candidate Common Indicator 27</u>) ⁷	<u>Noise from human activities causes no significant impact on marine and coastal ecosystems</u>	State: Noise levels at monitoring stations are below thresholds; The extent (% or km²)(%) of the assessment area which is above levels causing disturbance to sensitive marine animal is below limits, or such limits are exceeded for a limited amount of time.

⁵ Decision IG.20/4, Annex II

⁶ Decision IG.20/4, Annex II; IG.22/7

⁷ ibidem

Table 3: Operational Objectives, Indicators, GES Definitions and Targets for IMAP EO10.

Ecological Objective 10 (EO10): Marine and coastal litter do not adversely affect coastal and marine environment			
Operational Objective	Indicator	GES	Proposed Targets
10.1 The impacts related to properties and quantities of marine litter in the marine and coastal environment are minimized	10.1.1 Trends in the amount of litter washed ashore and/or deposited on coastlines (including analysis of its composition, spatial distribution and, where possible, source)	Number/amount of marine litter items on the coastline do not have negative impacts on human health, marine life and ecosystem services	Decreasing trend in the number of/amount of marine litter (items) deposited on the coast
	10.1.2 Trends in amounts of litter in the water column, including micro- plastics, and on the seafloor	Number/amount of marine litter items in the water surface and the seafloor do not have negative impacts on human health, marine life, ecosystem services and do not create risk to navigation	Decreasing trend in the number/amount of marine litter items in the water surface and the seafloor
	10.1.3 Trends in the amount of litter coming from riverine sources	Number/amount of marine litter items on riverbanks coastline and water surface in estuaries do not have negative impacts on human health, marine life, ecosystem services and do not create risk to navigation	Decreasing trend in the number/amount of marine litter items deposited on riverbanks coastlines and in water surface in estuaries
10.2 Impacts of litter on marine life are controlled to the maximum extent practicable	10.2.1 Trends in the amount of litter ingested by marine organisms and in the number of individuals entangled in marine litter Trends in the amount of litter ingested by or entangling marine organisms, especially mammals, marine birds and turtles	Number/amount of marine litter items entangling or/and ingested by marine organisms do not alter populations of sentinel organisms Amount (g) of marine litter ingested by marine organisms do not alter populations of sentinel organisms • Number of individuals entangled in marine litter do not alter populations of sentinel organisms	Decreasing trend in the cases of entanglement or/and a decreasing trend in the stomach content of the sentinel species. • Decreasing trend in the stomach content of the sentinel species. • Decreasing frequency of occurrence of sea turtles entangled in marine litter.

4. Terms of reference (TORs) for Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMONs), and Online Working Groups (OWGs)

4.1 Background and rationale

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

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

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

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

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

34.35. The Secretariat submitted this document to the 11th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (EcAp CG) with aim to: (a) upgrade the ToRs for Correspondence Groups CORMONS and COR ESA and online Working Groups (OWGs) to align with COP22 Decision; and (b) to clarify the flow of work between Correspondence Groups and other decision-making bodies of the MAP system as well as providing clarity on the relationship between MAP Components and the Coordinating Unit for EcAp related products.

35.36. Further to that document, MED POL prepared a version to the Joint Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Pollution and Marine Litter Monitoring (Anavyssos, Greece, 27 -28 May 2025), excluding the information and content relevant to CORESA.

36.37. In line with the consultation process initiated with the Contracting Parties after the 11th EcAp CG Meeting, the final scope is to include this section (i.e., section 4 of the present document) as a stand-alone annex into the under-preparation draft COP Decision for upgrading the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Policy and Roadmap in the Mediterranean.

4.2 Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMONs)

4.2.1 Composition

37-38. The Correspondence Groups on monitoring (CORMONs) are established for each thematic cluster – Biodiversity and Fisheries; Pollution and Marine Litter; and Coast and Hydrography.

38-39. CORMONs are composed of national experts designated by the Contracting Parties possessing the necessary expertise and experience in line with the mandates of respective CORMON for IMAP implementation. They can be designated by the MAP Focal Points/EcAp CG members or by the thematic/MAP Components' Focal Points, preferably in consultation with each other.

4.2.2 Operation

39-40. The CORMONs' work is supported by the respective MAP Component: MED POL for Pollution and Marine Litter; PAP/RAC for Coast and Hydrography; and SPA/RAC for Biodiversity and Fisheries. Technical and scientifically related tasks may be supported by external experts, during preparation of the documents for consideration of respective CORMONs. The overall coordination of the work of CORMONs remains with the Coordinating Unit and is carried out in accordance with MAP Programme of Work (POW) priorities and implementation of the EcAp Roadmap and Policy.

40-41. CORMONs may meet physically or by teleconference, depending on the agenda, the volume of work and documents to be considered. Provisions for CORMON meetings numbers, main deliverables and modality are made in the MAP POW.

4.2.3 CORMON Mandates

41-42. CORMONs have the primary role to guide and deliver the implementation of technical and scientific aspects of IMAP and delivery of QSR with support from the Secretariat and MAP Components and foster regional and sub-regional collaboration and exchange of best practices and know-how with regards to monitoring and assessment of marine and coastal environment.

42-43. The operation of the CORMONs should recognize that the implementation of the ecosystem approach is comprehensive in terms of the multidisciplinary and scientific context of the documents that need to be discussed, and therefore iterative in terms of coordination of the results of work within the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system and at Contracting Party level.

43-44. Generally, CORMONs are assigned with the preparation and negotiation of the following main types of IMAP products:

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

44-45. CORMON IMAP products are of a technical and scientific nature, they may impose policy and financial impacts on IMAP implementation. A detailed elaboration of the different levels of responsibilities for consideration and approval of different types of IMAP products is provided in Annex I.

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

46.47. The OWG do not replace the formal Correspondence Groups.

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

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

4.3 Effective interaction among different MAP bodies

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

50.51. In line with mandate of MED POL Focal Points, the present MED POL Focal Points Meeting should review only the sections related to the CORMON and Components/Thematic Focal Points Meetings, including the first two columns of Annex I.

Annex I

Possible products and interaction between EcAp governance bodies

Annex I: Possible products and interaction between EcAp governance bodies

Note: The present MED POL Focal Points Meeting should review only the first and second columns of Annex I.

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

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

8. Implementation of National IMAPs			
National IMAPs are of a technical nature with the implications for financial and policy aspects. The respective CORMON should be responsible for providing the recommendations in relation to: (i) the effectiveness of implementation of the National IMAPs related to the relevant IMAP Cluster; (ii) the gaps identified in the process of the National IMAPs implementation; (iii) the needs to be addressed, including technical, human resources, governance and financial aspects; (iv) harmonization of National IMAPs implementation; and (v) mechanisms/sources/means that could provide solutions and be used to improve implementation of National IMAPs.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW. Report on the progress, POW provisions as appropriate.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components.	CU reports on progress and related activities of POW and Budget as appropriate.
9. Proficiency Testing			
Proficiency Testing (PT) is of a technical nature, based on the complex scientifically related procedures; however, with certain implications for policy decision-makers.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW Review of the outcome of Proficiency testing and delivery of recommendations to Focal Points; consideration of their outcome in the design of the POW as appropriate.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components.	CU reports on progress and related activities of POW and Budget as appropriate.
10. Capacity Building Activities			
Products of a technical character.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities by CORMONs for their inclusion in POW.	CU Report on the progress.	CU reports on progress and related activities of POW and Budget.
11. Data management/QA/QC			
Products of a technical nature.	MAP Components report on progress to their Focal Points. Focal Points review proposed activities for their inclusion in POW as appropriate.	CU reports to EcAp CG on progress based on reports of MAP Components.	CU reports on progress and related activities of POW and Budget as appropriate.

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