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**Agenda item 6: MAP Communication Operational Strategy 2024-2025 in the framework of the
MAP Communication Strategy 2024-2029**

UNEP/MAP Communication Strategy update for the period 2024-2029

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Annex I
UNEP/MAP Communication Strategy 2024-2029

1. Introduction

1. At COP 17 (Paris, France, February 2012) the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted the Communication Strategy of UNEP/MAP for the period 2012-2017. At COP 19 (Athens, Greece, February 2016), the Contracting Parties requested the Secretariat, through Decisions IG.22/2 on the Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021 and Decision IG.22/18 on the Programme of Work and Budget 2016-2017, the preparation of an updated Communication Strategy of UNEP/MAP. The Communication Strategy for the period 2018-2023 has built on the previous version, refining its approach and implementation modalities. The 2018-2023 Communication Strategy has been extended to the next six years to cover the period 2024-2029, as valid framework to afford the next period also considering that the more operational aspects will be covered by the MAP Com Operational Strategy 2024-25 and the following related to the two next biennia.

1.1. Overview

2. The Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) has come a long way since its inception in 1975. Its main political achievement is the adoption of the Barcelona Convention and seven legal protocols conceived to protect the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment, and establishing an institutional framework of cooperation covering all 21 countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. The Barcelona Convention (signed in 1976 and amended in 1995) with its related seven Protocols is the only regional multilateral legal framework for the protection of the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment, setting the obligations "to prevent, abate, combat and to the fullest extent possible eliminate pollution of the Mediterranean Sea Area" and "to protect and enhance the marine environment in that area so as to contribute towards its sustainable development".

3. In this context, the Coordinating Unit and the MAP Components assist Mediterranean countries to fulfil their commitments under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, and implement the decisions of the meetings of the Contracting Parties, including the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD) and the recommendations of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD). Counting 22 Contracting Parties, the 21 countries bordering the Mediterranean and the European Union, MAP sets out a coherent legal and institutional cooperation framework to facilitate, support and coordinate regional action to improve the quality of life of the Mediterranean population through responding to pressures on the environment and reducing negative impact as well as restoring and maintaining ecosystem status, structures and functions.

4. An effective and targeted communication strategy supports the environmental objectives put forward in the Barcelona Convention and amplifies the reach of MAP messages.

5. The MAP's main advocacy objectives are to:

- Assess and control marine pollution;
- Ensure sustainable management of natural marine and coastal resources;
- Integrate the environment in social and economic development;
- Protect the marine environment and coastal zones through prevention and reduction of pollution, and as far as possible, elimination of pollution, whether land or sea-based;
- Protect the natural and cultural heritage;
- Strengthen solidarity among Mediterranean coastal States;
- Contribute to improvement of the quality of life.

6. The priorities of the Mid-Term Strategy 2022-2027 (MTS) are intended to be: “*action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, universally applicable to all countries in the region, while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. (...)*”. They are developed to be “*focused on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development*”.

7. The priority themes of the MTS reflect legal commitments and major needs at the regional and national levels, are in line with the global efforts for sustainable development and the objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025.

8. The **Long-Term Goals** to which the MTS 2022-2027 is contributing are *the achievement and maintenance of Good Environmental Status (GES) of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast, achieving sustainable development through the SDGs, and living in harmony with nature.*

9. In particular Programme 7 includes the following strategic objectives linked to the MAP Communication Strategy (2018-2023), the MAP Communication Strategy (2024-2029) and the Operational Communication Strategy 2020-2021 and next two biennia:

9.1. To enhance MAP's status as an authoritative voice on the environment and sustainable development in the Mediterranean and Advocate the MTS vision to policymakers;

9.2. To encourage commitment and contribution of key stakeholders in support of MAP priorities and enhance public participation in MAP's work;

9.3. To upgrade the MAP-Barcelona Convention system communication and dissemination capabilities;

9.4. To ensure Communicating as One and embark on digital transformation in the delivery of the Medium-Term Strategy; and

9.5. To enhance "Ocean literacy" and to engage communication, awareness raising and education on the coastal and marine environment towards different targets: elected officials, tourists, socio-professionals, etc. via the development of innovative tools (social marketing, etc.).

10. The enabling MTS 2022-27 Programme 6: *towards monitoring, assessment, knowledge and vision of the mediterranean sea and coast for informed decision-making* is also of relevance for the Communication Strategy 2024-2029

11. It includes the following strategic objectives linked to the IMAP-related COP Decisions and the Assessment Studies Decision adopted by COP 21:

11.1. To develop foresight and other assessment studies as per the MAP Phase II document, referring to the publication of the Report on the State and Evolution of the Mediterranean Environment at regular intervals, and the relevant COP decisions on assessment studies; and

11.2. To ensure a fully operational data management Info System based on consolidated and quality-control assured monitoring datasets to support integrated assessments.

1.2. Overall Communication Approach

12. Although the UNEP/MAP goals remain ambitious, they are set against the backdrop of financial realism. The formulation of this strategy has been guided by an understanding that UNEP/MAP financial and human resources are finite. Practical and budgetary feasibility has therefore been taken into account when developing this strategy and focus has been placed on the

approaches which can be implemented with MAP's resources.

13. This strategy builds on the groundwork achieved over the recent years and consolidates key achievements, for instance the increased regional and global visibility and specific events such as regional annual Coast Day celebrations. Concurrent to this, the strategy outlines new structures, approaches and tools necessary to increase MAP's visibility and maximize the impact of common policies, strategies, action plans and analysis designed to advance the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in the Mediterranean region and beyond.

14. The three-pillar approach, on which this strategy is based are to:

- Pass a MAP common message across with a view to clearly brand all MAP Components as part of the same organization;
- Identify and mobilize strong partners from the civil society and from private sector;
- Use a campaign approach with a view to inspire other actors, at regional and national levels and the public at large, around key issues.

15. This strategy seeks to:

- Improve communication:
 - Internal communication (among the various elements of the MAP system)
 - Outgoing communication (information shared with stakeholders)
 - Incoming communication (feedback from stakeholders)
 - Clearly defined responsibilities
- Outline communication goals and specific objectives:
 - Communicate with a clearly stated goal in mind
 - Communicate to clearly targeted groups of people and organizations
 - Communicate a small number of clear, concise, consistent and memorable ideas
- Use the right language:
 - Appropriate to audience and communication medium
 - Tailored to coincide with what matters and interests the audience
- Use the right channels:
 - Identify for each identified audience the most appropriate channels for communicating with them. These might include e-bulletins, conferences, workshops, leaflets, press releases, events – or broader methods such as media and website
 - Handle relations with the media to ensure that press releases appear in the right publications and gaining editorial coverage in influential media
 - Choose interactive channels to obtain feedback and monitor opinions on the policies

2. Communication Strategic Directions

2.1. Strategic Issues Assessment

16. A strategic communication audit is a systematic assessment, either formal or informal, of an organization's capacity for, or performance of, essential communication practices. It determines

what is working well, what is not, and what might work better if adjustments are made.

17. A strategic communication audit has both evaluative and formative value. It is evaluative in that it provides a “snapshot” of where an organization currently stands in terms of its communication capacity or performance. It is formative in that it also points to areas in which the organization can strengthen its performance.

18. Before starting any strategic communication audit, it is essential to fix the starting point and to understand benefits and barriers related to the communication process.

Benefits

External:

19. Effective external communication increases visibility and public support for MAP’s objectives for the protection of marine and costal environment of the Mediterranean. It will further enhance MAP’s credibility as a regional body supporting and coordinating the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and Protocols. This strategy is envisaged to act as a further springboard for communicating globally about MAP’S key issues and in key upcoming environmental fora.

Internal:

20. Internal communication is the life blood of any organization. Both internal and external communication is equally important to control the day-to-day operations of an organization. Effective internal communication leverages existing synergies, increases the probability of achieving organizational goals, optimizes impact and enhances awareness and involvement of staff. The goal of streamlined internal communication processes is a more integrated approach towards creating a bigger push for the same environmental issues from the MAP Coordinating Unit, components, and partners, thereby strengthening the organization’s collective capacity to communicate and engage externally.

Barriers

External:

21. In the real world, there are many diverse barriers to communicating about environmental issues to the public. According to recent studies, there are six barriers in the process of communication, including: (1) sender barriers, (2) encoding barriers, (3) medium barriers, (4) decoding barriers, (5) receiver barriers, and (6) feedback barriers (Eisenberg, E. M. (2010). Organizational communication: Balancing creativity and constraint. New York, NY: Saint Martin’s).

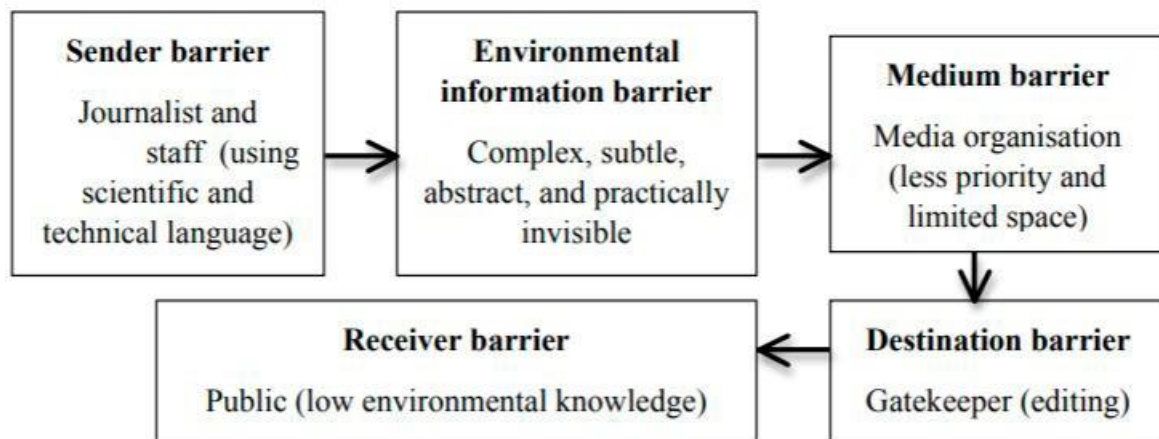


Figure 1: Barriers in the process of environmental communication among the media, adapted from Eisenberg (2010) *Organizational communication: Balancing creativity and constraint*,

22. The greatest barrier of the environmental communication is that the communicators must have great understanding and knowledge about the subtle complexities of the environmental issues before they can communicate these to the public. The communicator is a translator and must translate the information from specialized sources to something that can be understood by the audience.

23. The other barrier is a lack of capacity to centralize information and to act as a single voice; this is a consequence, *inter alia*, of structural deficiencies in the communication network.

24. The division of communication responsibilities constitutes a barrier to impactful external communication since tasks and structural relations are not always clearly defined.

2.2. Communication Objectives

25. As stated above, the UNEP/MAP communication strategy must facilitate two types of communication, which should be both considered when defining the objectives:

External:

26. The main goal is to maximize the visibility of MAP's activities and achievements in promoting environmental protection and sustainable development in the Mediterranean region in order to increase their impact. Furthermore, it aims to promote public participation and to build on the fact that, within the framework of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, MAP is coordinating action and facilitating cooperation amongst its Contracting Parties and other stakeholders in the region, in order to deliver tangible results in the protection of the Mediterranean environment.

27. Media, mainstream and social, are considered as an important channel for stimulating a constructive conversation around MAP issues and its role therein and thereby actively advancing its implicit and explicit advocacy. The importance of information collection, production and dissemination has been recognized and proposals have been made to improve ways to inform and engage target audiences.

Internal:

28. The overall goal is to foster an organizational culture in which communication is considered equally critical to the success of the UNEP/MAP mission. Furthermore, the aim is to align internal stakeholders around common objectives and assign a more active role in the roll-out of jointly-agreed activities to all parties.

29. Clear, specific, and measurable objectives have been defined to be the key to the success. These specific objectives are:

- Ensure the visibility of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system, its role and achievements;
- Raise awareness, among a wide but targeted group of audiences and user groups, about the critical role that the UNEP/MAP system plays in the protection of the Mediterranean environment and the promotion of sustainable development in the region;
- Strengthen MAP's status as an authoritative voice on the environment in the Mediterranean;
- Secure the commitment of key stakeholders in order to support UNEP/MAP issues and activities in public fora and act as advocates, directly and/or indirectly;
- Highlight the need for good governance and integrated marine and land ecosystem management in the Mediterranean;
- Inform and mobilize the Mediterranean population (general public) with the MAP narrative, through key information and media channels;
- Improve internal communication practices within MAP and its Components;
- Increase quality and quantity of media coverage;
- Improve quality and dissemination of information materials;
- Influence specific policies or policymakers around key aspects;
- Encourage participation among researchers or partner bodies.

2.3. Target Audiences

30. UNEP/MAP takes a focused approach to communication to ensure maximum output in the implementation of the MTS. The available tools and resources set an operating framework within which target audiences have been divided into three categories:

1. **Primary:** direct partners responsible for implementing programmes, policies and activities such as Contracting Parties, National Focal Points, MCSD members, MAP partners, MAP Components;
2. **Secondary:** partners and potential donors that have direct interest in the strategy and its outcomes, such as multilateral organizations, national and local administrations, NGOs, businesses and academics/researchers;
3. **Tertiary:** individuals, general public, or institutions that have direct or related interests in the strategy's work and goals and whose involvement will increase progress and success, and also who act as relays for more targeted initiatives.

2.4. Key Messages

31. For this communication strategy to be truly successful, MAP's overall goal, specific objectives and key messages need to fully align across its components. Effective message frameworks are dynamic and adaptable over time as conditions change, and as behaviors evolve, and where successes and barriers are encountered. The broader audiences are not always conversant in the specialized terminology used by MAP. The messages need to be tailored to the specific needs of the various target audiences.

32. A solid message platform will provide a framework for understanding MAP and its role in a way that differs from others. Applying and reapplying common messaging consistently, broadly and coherently will lead to a clear, recognizable identity and an ability to speak with one voice and

many “accents”. Ultimately, there is a clear link between effective communication and impactful advocacy.

33. The fundamental messages to broadcast are:

- MAP: What we are;
- MAP: What we do and deliver;
- MAP’s goal and vision of success;
- Areas MAP works in;
- How MAP’s work brings solutions to Mediterranean issues;
- What MAP concentrates on.

34. More messages can be added taking into consideration the global environmental and sustainable development agenda and specific political developments.

2.5. Tools and Methods

35. The deployment of targeted, specific and achievable methods and actions is essential in reaching the communication objectives set above. When focusing on more singled-out messages, the simultaneous use of multiple channels and tools will be favored, paying particular attention to social media and mobile devices, as well as other web-friendly design and distribution. The more traditional means, such as print, will coexist.

36. For effective UNEP/MAP communication, depending on the sub-objective and message, audience, timeframe, etc., a mix of both modern and well-established communication channels, tools and materials will be used. These include the website, social media, press releases and newsletters, involvement of mass media, print products, and multimedia, among others.

3. Communication Campaign

3.1. Campaign model

37. The UNEP/MAP Communication Strategy 2012-2017 was based on a “campaign model” – Unify, Mobilize and Inspire. This campaign model creates a solid but sufficiently agile communication framework that has guided MAP’s activities in the last six years and will guide for the next six. It sets out a forward-looking campaign that is to unfold sequentially based on a series of tactical approaches in line with key political priorities, milestone projects and platforms.

38. Building on the Communication Strategy 2012-2017 and in order to be more effective, additional approaches are listed below:

- Multiply through listening to the different targets and to the consequent multiplication of approaches and languages. This requires a lot of listening efforts and a two-way approach attentive to external feedback.
- Mobilize and inspire through innovative, emotional, and adventurous communicative language and style, combining “scientificity” and immediacy. Good communicators are capable to translate bureaucracy and technical language in something digestible for different targets.
- This model of a public-oriented campaign needs to be mirrored also inside the system. This requires a great deal of internal communication and a work on the image, approach and communication’s attitude of those who work in UNEP/MAP.
- Keep it simple and straight-forward avoiding unnecessary complexity. Some ways to do it: (i) be direct to get your points across to your audience; (ii) ask questions before moving forward;

(iii) tell a story to simplify conversations so that audience can relate; (iv) avoid oversimplification to make sure that important information is not lost.

3.2. Targeted Campaigns: Stimulating Active Awareness

39. This strategy utilizes a combination of complementary communication tools to ensure an optimal message uptake and the broadest possible reach in target areas. It also factors in the need to remain agile and locally relevant: different countries have different communication cultures, and with a toolbox of materials and initiatives, the communication mix can be varied and adapted as required whilst maintaining the overall message.

40. Key directions:

- Focus on key milestone projects and/or platforms each year to demonstrate impact and relevance and to drive steady media coverage that also taps into longer lead feature opportunities;
- Drive interest in and support for Regional Assessment Reports (State of the Environment and Development, Mediterranean Quality Status Report, etc.) and regular events such as the regional Mediterranean Coast Day;
- Capitalize on synergies with stakeholders and local partners around key milestone projects/platforms in order to drive the news agenda;
- Leverage international milestones and observances to ensure broader relevance of the MAP work;
- Optimize impact of the MAP information materials through better design, thematic focus and new distribution channels.

3.3. Proactive Partnerships: Raising the Profile of MAP Actions

41. This strategy outlines a set of approaches that seek to enhance MAP's overall visibility and impact. MAP partners and stakeholders play a valuable role in this process as they lend their voice to MAP information and communication campaigns. Taking into consideration the limit of MAP resources and capabilities, improving stakeholder coordination, aligning messages, directions and resources will increase efficiency and will demonstrate impact and on-the-ground relevance.

42. Key directions:

- Engage selected advocacy NGOs / MAP partners to amplify media outreach efforts as well as to engage the general public with whom they have more direct ties;
- Enlist and empower third party advocates to amplify MAP messages through media and in information materials;
- Showcase work/collaboration with the private sector through business-media;
- Joint outreach with partner international organizations, such as GEF, in media to raise MAP's visibility with key audiences;
- Align in-country/regional communication efforts with key challenges and priorities to demonstrate relevance of MAP issues.

3.4. Implementation of the Communication Strategy

43. The major information and communication activities, depending on available resources, are detailed below:

1. Digital activities including Website management and update

- Align Website content with the target audience and strategic communication goals;
- Keeping it up-to-date;
- Wider dissemination of the projects' results;
- Social Media Channel Management.

2. Media relation

Interactions with editors, reporters and journalists. The media can be newspapers, radio, television and the internet. The goal is to communicate a newsworthy message, story or information using the appropriate media outlets.

3. Branding and visibility

Build visibility and trust through the creation and reinforcement of a clear identity.

4. Information material

Regular production of online and hard-copies publications, both on specific themes and events, to be regularly disseminated.

5. Designs and layouts

Consistent use of common graphic appearance to benefit the overall image of the MAP system.

6. Networking and information dissemination

In line with the established procedures of MAP, INFO/RAC shall ensure information dissemination to existing networks and endeavors to expand them:

- Communication Task Force
- Communication Focal Points of Contracting Parties
- MAP National Focal Points (with the clearance of MAP Coordinator)
- MAP Components' National Focal Points
- Partners
- Media

Thematic panels and periodical meetings between communicators of each organization involved are beneficial for a more productive exchange.

Upgrade meetings on communication tool, processes, results and feedback can be held either on dedicated online platforms or in person, whenever possible.

Innovative forms of collaboration should be considered such as team-building, world cafés, brainstorming and focus groups to improve knowledge, synergy and therefore internal communication.

7. Photo library, with contributions by Contracting Parties and MAP Components.

3.5. Measurement

44. It is important to consider measurement at the beginning and to be clear from the start about what is to be achieved, how the objectives will be met and what measurements will be used along the way, to monitor progress and success.

45. Measuring is directly linked with strategy and impact. It not only concerns quantitative results but also qualitative analysis of the significance and meaning behind the findings. In an environment where communication has the power to shape conversation and drive policy outcomes, it is critical to measure the effectiveness of all directions and tactics.

46. As it is impossible to measure everything, and not everything that is important can be measured, a manageable number of key indicators have to be identified as areas of focus. The metrics that can be used are numerous and varied, including: tracking the number of information requests put to INFO/RAC, number of press briefings, perception tracking surveys, analyzing website traffic, setting up ratings' buttons for online content, etc.

47. A three-pronged approach to measurement will be applied, combining relevant metrics, strategic interpretation and forward-looking insights, including the following:

- Quantitative measures, such as media metrics, website hits and information requests;
- Advocacy measures, which track and evaluate engagement and delivery of messages by others;
- Reputation measures, which tap into media influencers to assess progress and inform changes to tactics and approaches.

48. Success will result in key audiences having a positive regard for UNEP/MAP and its mission, accompanied by an awareness of key messages, and/or perceptions consistent with this communication strategy. Based on the above, a small number of key indicators need to be identified to monitor the implementation of the Communication Strategy.

4. Resources

49. This ambitious strategy can be fully implemented with the use of large financial resources only very partially covered by INFO/RAC funds and will need additional resources and a full support from all the MAP BC system.