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Fifteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

Videoconference, 23–25 June 2021

Report of the Fifteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

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Report of the Fifteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points Videoconference, 23–25 June 2021

Introduction

1. Following the kind invitation of the Maltese Government, the Fifteenth Meeting of the Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity (SPA/BD) Focal Points was to be held in Malta. Because of the sanitary conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and according to the recommendation of the Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan, Barcelona Convention Secretariat (UNEP/MAP), all meetings scheduled up to July 2021 are to be conducted by teleconference.
2. The Fifteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points (hereinafter referred to as “the meeting”) was hosted by Malta and held by videoconference from 23 to 25 June 2021.

Participation

3. All the SPA/BD focal points were invited to attend the meeting or to designate representatives. The following Contracting Parties were represented at the meeting: Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Union, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey.
4. The Ad Hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) was represented by its Chair and Vice-Chair.
5. The secretariats of the following United Nations bodies, conventions and agreements and intergovernmental organizations were represented as observers: the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Council of Europe - Bern Convention and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
6. The following governmental organization was also represented as observer: the European Topic Centre of Spatial Analysis and Synthesis, University of Malaga (ETC/UMA).
7. The following nongovernmental organizations were also represented as observers: the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles (MEDASSET), the Network of Marine Protected Areas Managers in the Mediterranean, (MedPAN), the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), Notre Grand Bleu association, Oceana, and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).
8. The UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit, the Information and Communication Regional Activity Centre (INFO/RAC), the Priority Action Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC) and the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) were represented at the meeting.
9. The Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) acted as the secretariat of the meeting.
10. The list of participants is attached as Annex I to the present report.

Agenda item 1 Opening of the meeting

11. The meeting was opened on Wednesday, 23 June 2021, at 8.30 a.m. UTC+1, by the representative of the host country and the Director of SPA/RAC.
12. Mr. Duncan BORG, Biodiversity and Water Unit Team Manager at the Environment and Resources Authority of Malta, thanked all participants for their presence and said that he looked forward to fruitful discussions.

13. Mr. Khalil ATTIA, Director of SPA/RAC, on behalf of UNEP/MAP Secretariat and SPA/RAC, welcomed the participants and thanked the Maltese authorities for hosting the meeting. He said that the biennium had been rich in terms of activities, processes and achievements at Mediterranean regional and national levels towards implementation of biodiversity and ecosystems core theme strategic outcomes within the Barcelona Convention Mid-Term Strategy 2016–2021 and in line with the Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity Protocol and the Barcelona Convention itself. He voiced regret that the meeting could not be held face-to-face and noted the difficulties experienced by all in the biennium since the fourteenth meeting of SPA/BD focal points.

Agenda item 2 Organizational matters

2.1. Rules of procedure

14. The internal rules adopted for meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution and its protocols (UNEP/IG.43/6, Annex XI), as amended by the Contracting Parties (UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.1/5 and UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.3/5), applied *mutatis mutandis* to the present meeting.

2.2. Election of officers

15. The meeting unanimously elected the following officers:

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Chairperson: | Mr. Duncan BORG (Malta), |
| Vice-Chairpersons: | Ms. Melina MARCOU (Cyprus), Mr. Zamir DEDEJ (Albania), |
| Rapporteur: | Ms. Samia BOUFARES (Tunisia). |

2.3. Adoption of the agenda

16. The Secretariat introduced the provisional agenda, which had been issued as document UNEP/MED WG.502/1 Rev.1, and the annotated version in document UNEP/MED WG.502/2 Rev.2.

17. After reviewing the two documents, the meeting approved the Agenda and the proposed timetable. The Agenda of the meeting appears as Annex II to this report.

2.4. Organization of work

18. The Secretariat proposed that the meeting be held in daily sessions from 8.30 (UTC+1) to 11.30 (UTC+1) and from 12.30 (UTC+1) to 17.00 (UTC+1), subject to adjustments, as necessary.

19. The working languages of the meeting were English and French. Simultaneous interpretation was available for all the sessions.

Agenda item 3 Status of implementation of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity (SPA/BD) in the Mediterranean

20. The Secretariat introduced document UNEP/MED WG.502/3, entitled “Report on the status of implementation of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol)”. The document contained an analysis of the information provided by the 11 countries that had submitted reports on implementation of the SPA/BD Protocol through the online reporting system of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. The reporting period covered the previous biennium, starting in January 2018 and ending in December 2019.

21. The meeting expressed appreciation for the effort made by some Contracting Parties to report on implementation of the SPA/BD Protocol but stressed that it was difficult to have an overview on the status of implementation from only a few reports.

22. The meeting called upon the Contracting Parties to submit implementation reports in a timely manner and in accordance with the reporting requirements of the Convention so that the status of and gaps in implementation of the Protocol could be better assessed.

23. The meeting noted that the online form was difficult to access and that it was difficult to provide the required data without access to data submitted previously. Receipt of a limited number of reports indicated that there was a problem. The meeting stressed that countries have obligations to report to many conventions and asked for assistance to improve and streamline reporting.

24. The meeting suggested that a workshop be organized or a working group established to analyse the difficulties encountered by Contracting Parties with the online reporting system and to propose solutions to simplify reporting and improve the form and make it user friendly.

Agenda item 4 Progress report on activities carried out to implement the Biodiversity and Ecosystems core theme since the Fourteenth meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

25. The Director of SPA/RAC introduced the progress report contained in document UNEP/MED WG.502/4, which reflected the themes, strategic outcomes and key outputs defined in the MAP Mid-Term Strategy 2016–2021. He described in detail the main achievements and challenges met during implementation of the programme of work.

26. The meeting welcomed with appreciation the progress report presented by the Secretariat on the many varied activities undertaken since the 14th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points and acknowledged the work of SPA/RAC in implementing the Programme of Work, despite the difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic during the period.

27. Many delegations commended the support received by their countries from SPA/RAC to implement conservation measures in key biodiversity areas and requested the Centre to pursue its efforts during the next biennium towards achieving the regional objectives.

28. Representatives of partner organizations took the floor to express their satisfaction with the bonds of collaboration established between their organizations and SPA/RAC and confirmed their willingness to pursue collaborative activities with the Centre in the coming years. One representative, referring to document UNEP/MED WG.502/Inf.9, stressed the importance of the protocol it contained for the standardisation of sea turtles stranding monitoring across the Mediterranean region.

29. The meeting acknowledged the continuous commitment of the Secretariat and encouraged it to strengthen existing synergies with relevant regional partners to achieve regional objectives under the SPA/BD Protocol, in particular for activities related to conservation of endangered species and key habitats, surveying and monitoring of marine and coastal biodiversity, capacity-building and development of a coherent network of marine protected areas.

Agenda item 5 Conservation of species and habitats

5.1. Updating of the Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea

30. Referring to document UNEP/MED WG.502/5 “Draft updated Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea”, the Secretariat informed the meeting about the update process and recalled that it has been conducted in close collaboration with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat. It

underlined that the new version of the Action Plan included for the first time an implementation schedule.

31. The meeting welcomed the updated action plan, reviewed the document and endorsed the draft updated Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans and agreed on its submission, as amended, to the MAP focal points meeting and the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 22) for adoption. The document as amended by the meeting appears as Annex III to this report.

5.2. Updating of the Action Plan for the conservation of habitats and species associated with seamounts, underwater caves and canyons, aphotic hard beds and chemo-synthetic phenomena in the Mediterranean Sea (Dark Habitats Action Plan)

32. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat introduced document UNEP/MED WG.502/6, which contained the draft updated Dark Habitats Action Plan and explained the steps in evaluating implementation, updating the plan and setting a timetable for the period 2021–2025.

33. It informed the meeting that SPA/RAC had prepared the Guidelines for the assessment of environmental impact on coralligenous and maërl assemblages (UNEP/MED WG.502/Inf.3) as provided for in the Action Plan for the conservation of the coralligenous and other calcareous bioconcretions in the Mediterranean Sea. It called the attention of participants to information document UNEP/MED WG.502/Inf.4 containing the Interpretation manual for the marine habitat types in the Mediterranean, which would shortly be sent to the Contracting Parties for national consultation.

34. It also introduced document UNEP/MED WG.502/Inf.5 on the “Project on mapping key marine habitats and assessing their vulnerability to fishing activities (MedKeyHabitats II Project)”.

35. The representatives of Contracting Parties concerned by the Medkeyhabitats II project funded by the MAVA Foundation for nature, commended the assistance provided by SPA/RAC to implement the activities in their respective countries and the importance of the products elaborated, such as national action plans, pilot studies, and distribution and vulnerability maps of marine key habitats.

36. The meeting recognized the importance of the updated action plan for the conservation of dark habitats and the associated species and noted that financial and technical assistance would be necessary to implement the provisions of the plan in several countries. It stressed the importance of multisectoral cooperation in deep-sea conservation and called for the strengthening of cooperation between SPA/RAC and its partners on the conservation and sustainable use of the high-seas and the deep-sea environment.

37. The meeting reviewed and approved the draft updated Action Plan for the conservation of habitats and species associated with seamounts, underwater caves and canyons, aphotic hard beds and chemo-synthetic phenomena in the Mediterranean Sea (Dark Habitats Action Plan) and invited SPA/RAC to submit it, as amended, to the MAP focal points meeting and to COP 22 for adoption. The amended document appears as Annex IV to this report.

5.3. First elements to elaborate the List of Reference of Pelagic Habitat Types in the Mediterranean Sea

38. Recalling Decision IG.24/14 of the 21st Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Naples, Italy, 2–5 December 2019), the Secretariat introduced document UNEP/MED WG.502/7. It stressed the need to adapt it to the indicators developed in other fora, such as those of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic and the Baltic Marine Environment Commission, for assessing the environmental status of pelagic habitats, to be used in elaborating the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR).

39. In considering the first elements proposed for the List of Reference of Pelagic Habitat Types in the Mediterranean Sea, the meeting (i) invited SPA/RAC to take into account, as appropriate, written comments received from the focal points on the subject in amending working document UNEP/MED WG.502/7, and (ii) endorsed the proposal of the Secretariat and agreed on its submission to the meeting of MAP focal points and to COP 22 with a recommendation to establish a multidisciplinary group of experts to elaborate the List for consideration by COP 23.

5.4. Ballast water management strategy for the Mediterranean Sea: 2022-2027

40. Making reference to the Decision IG.24/14 of COP 21 (Naples, Italy, 2–5 December 2019) relative to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020–2021, the representative of REMPEC introduced document UNEP/MED WG.502/8. He noted that the draft strategy had been prepared with SPA/RAC and presented to the Fourteenth Meeting of REMPEC focal points (videoconference, 31 May–2 June 2021). He said that the draft strategy was the result of consultations with all Contracting Parties, through the MAP focal points, in consultation with REMPEC prevention focal points and SPA/BD focal points. The draft strategy took into consideration several key developments: the entry into force of the Ballast Water Management Convention in 2017, adoption of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) in 2016 and adoption of the updated Action Plan concerning species introductions and invasive species in 2016.

41. The meeting welcomed the draft Ballast Water Management Strategy for the Mediterranean Sea (2022–2027) prepared by REMPEC in cooperation with SPA/RAC and reviewed by the Fourteenth Meeting of REMPEC focal points, with the view of its submission to the next meeting of MAP focal points and COP 22 for adoption.

Agenda item 6 Conservation of sites of particular ecological interest

6.1 Report by the Chair of the Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) on the group's works during 2021

42. Referring to document UNEP/MED WG.502/9 “Report by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) on the group's works during the period 2020-2021”, the Secretariat provided some background elements on the AGEM since the 14th meeting of SPA/BD focal points.

43. Referring to the same document, the Chair and Vice-Chair of AGEM presented the report on the AGEM work during the period 2020–2021. They presented the outputs that the Group had produced in the previous period and noted that some other work should be further completed.

44. The participants welcomed the report of the AGEM and acknowledged with appreciation the work of the Secretariat and the AGEM during the period 2020–2021. They highlighted the role of the AGEM in providing scientific and technical advice to the Contracting Parties and to the Secretariat with regard to advancing marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean region and recommended that the mandate of its members be extended to cover 2022–2023.

45. Given the ambitious expectations of the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat, the meeting recommended that the terms of reference of the Group be reviewed and its mandate be extended for longer than 2 years.

6.1.1 Criteria for inclusion of Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) in the Directory of Mediterranean SPAs

46. The Secretariat presented the “Draft Criteria for inclusion of Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) in the Directory of Mediterranean SPAs” in document UNEP/MED WG.502/10.

47. A discussion ensued about whether OECMs could be also included in the directory; however, the Secretariat explained that an area must be a marine and/or coastal protected area in order to be included, and that the protection be regulated either nationally or locally. Several participants emphasized the importance of binding management plans and conservation measures for each SPA.

48. The meeting proposed that the reporting format on the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols be amended so that it could also serve for reporting to the Directory of Mediterranean SPAs and requested that SPA/RAC includes reports submitted to the Directory in the Database of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (MAPAMED).

49. The meeting endorsed the definition of SPAs and the draft Criteria and invited SPA/RAC to submit them for the consideration of the next meeting of MAP focal points and COP 22. The document appears as Annex V to this report.

6.1.2 Guidance on identifying and reporting Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment

50. The Secretariat presented document UNEP/MED WG.502/11 including considerations on identifying and reporting of Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment.

51. The meeting requested the Secretariat to (i) include a section on OECMs in MAPAMED, (ii) assist the Contracting Parties in identifying and reporting OECMs and (iii) provide guidance on application of the criteria of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to the Mediterranean setting, particularly to ensure that a coherent threshold of biodiversity be maintained.

6.2. Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean

52. The Secretariat presented the “Draft Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean”, submitted as document UNEP/MED WG.502/12.

53. One participant asked for clarification of how the Strategy overlapped with the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO). In response, the Secretariat explained that the two strategies are aligned.

54. The meeting initiated a prolonged discussion on the definitions of the words “strictly” and “strongly” protected with respect to MCPAs. Several speakers noted that the terms had been defined elsewhere but that their applicability to MCPAs would depend on the type of protection to which they referred. Eventually, the discussion settled on using the expression “enhanced conservation levels”.

55. The meeting requested the Secretariat to develop an evaluation and monitoring framework for the Strategy, during the biennial period 2022-2023, with the technical support of AGEM.

56. The meeting reviewed and endorsed the proposed regional strategy and invited SPA/RAC to submit it to the next MAP focal points meeting and COP 22 for adoption. The amended document appears as Annex VI to the present report.

6.3. List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI List)

6.3.1. Ordinary Periodic Review of SPAMIs

57. The Secretariat introduced the report on the Ordinary Periodic Review of the areas included in the SPAMI List (UNEP/MED WG.502/13 Rev.1), which had been undertaken in 2021. It concerned the following 11 SPAMIs:

- Lara-Toxeftra Turtle Reserve (Cyprus);
- Bouches de Bonifacio Nature Reserve (France);
- Capo Caccia-Isola Piana Marine Protected Area (Italy);
- Miramare Marine Protected Area (Italy);
- Plemmirio Marine Protected Area (Italy);
- Punta Campanella Marine Protected Area (Italy);
- Tavolara-Punta Coda Cavallo Marine Protected Area (Italy);
- Torre Guaceto Marine Protected Area and Natural Reserve (Italy);
- Al-Hoceima National Park (Morocco);
- Archipelago of Cabrera National Park (Spain); and
- Maro-Cerro Gordo Cliffs (Spain).

58. The meeting commended the efforts made for the evaluation of SPAMIs during the biennium despite the challenging circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and approved the results of the ordinary periodic review of the 11 SPAMIs.

59. The representatives of Lebanon and Tunisia informed the meeting of the corrective measures identified and launched for their SPAMIs, which had been included in a period of a provisional nature by COP 21.

60. The Secretariat informed the meeting that ordinary reviews were to be conducted of one SPAMI in 2022 and four in 2023. The SPAMI to be reviewed in 2022 is Karaburun Sazan National Marine Park in Albania, and those to be reviewed in 2023 are:

- Banc des Kabyles Marine Reserve (Algeria);
- Habibas Islands (Algeria);
- Calanques National Park (France); and
- Portofino Marine Protected Area (Italy).

6.3.2. Inclusion of areas in the SPAMI List

61. The Secretariat informed the meeting that no proposals have been received for inclusion of areas in the SPAMI List during the intersession.

62. A suggestion was made that new SPAMIs could be proposed by SPA/RAC partners, according to the same rules and frameworks as proposals by Contracting Parties. That possibility would be especially important for designation of SPAMIs in areas beyond national jurisdictions, in the high seas and deep-sea areas. The focal points recalled that an MPA must be in place before a SPAMI was proposed and that any such proposal had to be approved nationally or multilaterally by the concerned neighbouring Parties. The Secretariat emphasized the necessity of amending the SPA/BD Protocol if such a suggestion had to be implemented.

63. It was mentioned that partner organizations could however assist the Parties, as relevant, in preparing SPAMI proposals and supporting the related consultation processes.

6.3.3. Concepts to set up the SPAMI Day and SPAMI Certificate

64. The Secretariat presented the document UNEP/MED WG.502/14 “Draft Concepts to set up the Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance Day (SPAMI Day) and SPAMI Certificate”.

65. In response to a proposal that the SPAMI Day be linked to regional MPA events such as the Mediterranean MPA Forum, several participants and the Secretariat emphasized the importance of having the SPAMI Day celebration independent from any other event or celebration.

66. The meeting welcomed the proposed Concepts as submitted by the Secretariat and invited SPA/RAC to submit them to the next MAP focal points meeting and COP 22 for adoption. The draft Concepts appear in Annex VII to this report.

6.4. Draft Guidance Document for the identification and designation of Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas in relation to SPAMIs

67. The representative of REMPEC introduced document UNEP/MED WG.502/15 “Draft Guidance Document for the identification and designation of Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas in relation to Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance”, prepared in collaboration with SPA/RAC and presented to the Fourteenth Meeting of REMPEC focal points (videoconference, 31 May–2 June 2021). He said that the guidance document was elaborated in the framework of the cooperation agreement between UNEP/MAP and the Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea Protection. The draft document had been disseminated to participants at the Adriatic Region Workshop on Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs) and the Mediterranean Seminar on PSSAs (Tirana, Albania, 9–12 December 2019), organized by SPA/RAC in collaboration with REMPEC, to provide information on regulation of PSSAs and policy tools that could contribute to protection of sea areas subject to the environmental impact of maritime traffic.

68. Consultations had been conducted with all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, and led to the finalisation of the draft PSSA Guidance Document.

69. Participants welcomed the draft guidance document as a useful practical tool for identifying candidate PSSAs in relation to SPAMIs.

Agenda item 7: Status of implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Roadmap

7.1. Implementation of the second phase (2019–2021) of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP - Biodiversity and non-indigenous species) in the framework of the EcAp Roadmap

70. The Secretariat presented document UNEP/MED WG.502/16 on implementation of the second phase (2019–2021) of the IMAP for biodiversity and non-indigenous species in the framework of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Roadmap, which described national and regional progress made in implementing the IMAP. The document also provided information on the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR), including relevant aspects of the IMAP common indicators for monitoring and assessment scales, assessment criteria and reference and thresholds values. The document includes in the appendices the proposals on the monitoring and assessment elements on the agreed IMAP Common indicators related to biodiversity cluster, already discussed within the informal online working groups and endorsed by the Meeting of the Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Biodiversity and Fisheries (videoconference, 10–11 June 2021).

71. The Secretariat also presented information documents UNEP/MED WG.502/Inf.10 “Comparative Analysis undertaken with regard to IMAP and the European Commission GES Decision 2017/848/EU for Biodiversity” and UNEP/MED WG.502/Inf.11 “Methodological Approach for mapping the interrelations between Pressures-Impacts and the Status of Marine Ecosystem Components for

Biodiversity Cluster” and informed the meeting that these “living” documents would be continuously updated and discussed within the online working group and would be presented to the next meeting of the CORMON.

72. The participants welcomed the progress made during this second phase of the IMAP implementation and encouraged the Secretariat to continue the work with the relevant informal Online Working Groups and the CORMON.

73. The Meeting endorsed the appendixes of the document, as appearing in Annexes VIII, IX, X and XI to this report and agreed to consider their use for the purpose of the 2023 MED QSR preparation.

7.2. Status of implementation of the ODYSSEA project on Mediterranean observatories

74. The Secretariat presented information document UNEP/MED WG.502/Inf.12 on the ODYSSEA project on opportunities for supporting the IMAP through integrated marine observation systems, capacity-building and information services.

75. Several participants expressed appreciation for the support given for establishment of ocean observatories around the Mediterranean and the effective national engagement of several Parties. This European Union HORIZON 2020 project had effectively supported various IMAP indicators recording in sizeable marine areas throughout the Mediterranean with innovative technological tools.

76. The meeting took note of the document and invited the Secretariat to strengthen synergies with other data sources to ensure a successful 2023 MED QSR.

7.3. Status of implementation of the GEF Adriatic project on EcAp and MSP

77. With reference to the document UNEP/MED WG.502/Inf.15, the Secretariat presented the main outcomes of the GEF Adriatic project “Implementation of Ecosystem Approach in the Adriatic Sea through Marine Spatial Planning” implemented in Albania and Montenegro by the MAP Coordinating Unit, SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC, which contributed to implementation of both IMAP and MSP with the view of achieving good environmental status at both national and sub-regional levels.

78. Participants welcomed the effective cooperation that had made the project possible, including capacity-building and marine field surveys, despite the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

79. The representatives of Albania and Montenegro highlighted the efforts done at national level and the important results achieved through the GEF Adriatic project as well as their willingness for further support from the UNEP/MAP system to continue the implementation of the IMAP and MSP in Albania and Montenegro.

Agenda item 8: Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAP BIO)

80. Referring to document UNEP/MED WG.502/17 Rev.1 “Draft Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO)”, the Secretariat presented the draft Strategic Action Programme, as revised by SAPBIO national correspondents at their 8th meeting (videoconference, 22 June 2021).

81. The meeting noted that the Draft Post-2020 SAPBIO is aligned with other relevant global and regional initiatives, and discussed the draft regarding feasibility and attainability of its goals, targets and

actions by Mediterranean countries as well as harmonization with other relevant strategies adopted in relation to the SPA/BD Protocol, such as the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean.

82. In relation to reporting by Parties on their implementation of the Post-2020 SAPBIO, the meeting recommended that harmonisation and streamlining should be ensured with other relevant reporting systems to avoid more burden on the Contracting Parties as for their reporting obligations to numerous conventions and agreements.

83. The meeting reviewed the draft document, including within the framework of a working group that finalized the revision of the draft document. The meeting invited SPA/RAC to submit the Draft Post-2020 SAPBIO to the next MAP focal points meeting and COP 22 for adoption. The amended document appears as Annex XII to the present report.

Agenda item 9: Draft Programme of work of SPA/RAC for the biennium 2022–2023

84. The Director of SPA/RAC presented the draft SPA/RAC programme of work for the 2022–2023 biennium contained in document UNEP/MED WG.502/18. He emphasized that the draft Programme of Work (PoW) of SPA/RAC for the 2022–2023 biennium has been prepared following the guiding elements included in the Planning and Programming Paper for the preparation of the 2022–2023 PoW prepared by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat. Since this is the first biennium of the next MTS cycle (2022–2027), which is still under development. SPA/RAC’s draft 2022-2023 PoW uses all the main elements included in the current draft of the new MTS, including key priorities, objectives and strategic outcomes.

85. The activities proposed aim at assisting Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties in the implementation of the SPA/BD Protocol. They were developed considering the priorities defined in the draft Post-2020 SAPBIO, the draft Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs) and OECMs in the Mediterranean, both under development, and the Regional Action Plans and Strategy on threatened and endangered species and key habitats.

86. The SPA/RAC’s draft 2022-2023 PoW is developed mainly under four MTS Programmes, namely “Towards Healthy Mediterranean Ecosystems and Enhanced Biodiversity”, “Governance”, “Together for a shared vision of the Mediterranean Sea and coast” and “Towards a stronger advocacy, awareness, education and communication of the Mediterranean Sea and coast”.

87. It also considers relevant current and emerging global and regional frameworks and processes, including SDGs; UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the Post-2020 global biodiversity framework, UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030), UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), the under development global Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction binding framework (BBNJ), etc.

88. The Director emphasized the importance of continued collaboration with other MAP Components, relevant intergovernmental partners, NGOs and other regional, national and local organizations to enhance synergies and avoid duplication of activities.

89. Representative of partner organizations expressed their willingness to contribute to the implementation of the proposed programme of work for 2022–2023.

90. The meeting congratulated the Secretariat on the quality of the document and welcomed the ambitious draft programme of work of SPA/RAC for the biennium 2022–2023. It made some comments and suggestions on the programme of work, which SPA/RAC will forward to the MAP Secretariat for inclusion in the relevant draft decision to be submitted to the next MAP focal points meeting and COP 22.

Agenda item 10: Any other matters

91. No other question related to the topics of the meeting was raised by participants or by the Secretariat.

Agenda item 11: Adoption of conclusions and recommendations of the meeting

92. The meeting reviewed the conclusions and recommendations prepared by the Secretariat and endorsed them, as they appear in Annex XIV to this report. It agreed that the draft report of the meeting will be prepared by the Secretariat and circulated by e-mail to the participants for approval.

Agenda item 12: Closure of the meeting

93. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the meeting was closed on Friday 25 June 2021, at 15.00 UTC+1.