



UN Environment Programme
Mediterranean Action Plan
Priority Actions Programme/Regional Activity Centre

Second meeting of the Working Group for MSP: Updating the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)

Online, 04 February 2025

Meeting report

Introduction

The second meeting of the Working Group for MSP, held online on 4 February 2025, focused on providing technical contributions regarding MSP-related activities for updating the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD). The meeting gathered 19 participants from Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy Lebanon, Malta, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia, Türkiye, DG MARE European Commission, MedCities, and UNEP/MAP (CU and PAP/RAC). List of participants is available as Annex 2 of the report.

Agenda Item 1: Opening and Welcome

PAP/RAC opened the meeting by welcoming participants and noting the inclusion of additional members nominated for this WG meeting. Following the presentation of the agenda (Annex 1), participants were updated on the MSSD process, key MCSD activities, and the role of the WG.

It was emphasized that the MSSD serves as a regional cooperation framework addressing key topics such as ecosystem protection, sustainable economy, green transition, governance, and agriculture. The strategy is implemented through strategic actions at both regional and national levels, supported by flagship initiatives. The current MSSD, covering the period 2016–2025, is now being updated for the next decade. The MCSD, as the advisory body for the MSSD, has determined that this update will not introduce major changes but will align the strategy with recent global and regional frameworks, including the Paris Agreement and the EU Green Deal.

The update process is informed by multiple parallel efforts, including contributions from working groups, the Secretariat, Regional Activity Centers, the final evaluation process and discussions within the MCSD Steering Committee. The MSP WG plays a key role in providing thematic input to ensure alignment between MSP and sustainable blue economy objectives. However, the final decision on the update remains with the MCSD.

Currently, the MSP WG operates as an informal group, supporting the MSSD update process. Upon the completion of this process, the group will transition into a formal working group composed of Contracting Parties' representatives, focusing on the implementation of the COP23 [Decision IG.26/10](#) on the Conceptual Framework for Implementing Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean.

Agenda Item 2: MSSD update

Following an overview of the MSSD's current status and the update process, participants provided some inputs linked to previous WG meeting and provided inputs relevant for the MSSD update process.

Linked to the topics discussed on the previous meeting, it was proposed to:

- highlight oil and gas issues as well as soil erosion as a component of land-sea interactions-related key issues;
- clearly elaborate the criteria for the selection of indicators;
- include some relevant details regarding MSP implementation such as geographical scope, responsible authorities and alike;

- provide standardised use of / explanation of terminology such as those related to “open ocean resource exploitation”.

Participants also shared national and regional experiences relevant to the MSD update process, including:

- **Slovenia:** Insights from the MSP process, which emphasized strong land-sea interactions, governance, and capacity-building as key factors for success.
- **Türkiye:** New initiatives aimed at strengthening partnerships for the blue economy, providing guidance for maritime sectors, and developing NBS and capacity-building programs.
- **EU:** Several relevant projects contribute valuable experience to MSSD implementation, such as MSPGREEN and MEDIGREEN. Additionally, the Med MSP CoP¹, which gathers 100 experts from across the Mediterranean, will further focus its work within four thematic working groups on nature conservation, offshore renewable energy, fisheries and aquaculture—advancing the green transformation of these sectors through MSP.
- **Tunisia:** Recent progress includes the roadmap for the development of a blue economy strategy, as well as a national strategy of ecological transition (2023) that integrates all other relevant strategic documents.

Within the discussion, important proposals for the update of MSSD national and regional activities were highlighted:

1. Reinforce MSP as a key governance tool

MSP plays a crucial role in ensuring policy coherence and a coordinated approach to environmental protection and the sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean. This can be achieved by:

- **Integrating the ecosystem approach** into different stages of planning to support the achievement of GES (further strengthen the activity 1.1.2).
- **Ensuring the development of synergies** among the Convention’s protocols and other relevant tools and approaches, in particular between the MSP, the ICZM and the EcAp (to be addressed within activities 1.1.1, 1.1.2 and 1.1.3).
- **Aligning sectoral policies** with environmental protection goals, ensuring they contribute to achieving GES.
- Synergise efforts and achievements of linking **different MSP-related initiatives** in the Mediterranean.
- **Using SEA as the backbone** of environmentally responsible MSP. Ensure knowledge transfer from countries that apply SEA regulation, including good examples of policies and plans subjected to an SEA, best implementation practices and alike.
- **Promoting sustainable use** by:
 - Reducing user conflicts at national and international levels, thus supporting Mediterranean blue economy efforts.
 - Providing guidance for coastal and maritime sectors in their green transition.
 - Encouraging the development and use of NBS. Support proposal of new flagship initiative on Posidonia as NBS.

¹ CoP – Community of Practice

2. Enhance MSP-related capacity building

Capacity-building efforts should target different levels of governance and policymaking groups by:

- Providing technical guidance.
- Facilitating the exchange of experience, including through the MSP WG's collaboration with other governance mechanisms such as MSP Med COP at the regional level as well as national initiatives like CAMP projects.

3. Strengthen the social dimension of MSP

In addition to its environmental and economic aspects, MSP should also support coastal communities by safeguarding and promoting intangible cultural heritage.

4. Bolster the Conservation Component Under Objective 1

Strengthening the conservation dimension within MSP will enhance its effectiveness in achieving environmental and biodiversity protection goals:

- Support for adding strategic direction on MPAs as part of Objective 1 (as SD 1.3)
- Some of the activities with SD 1.1., i.e. 1.1.4, 1.1.6, 1.1.7, could be integrated in 1.3

5. Ensure Stronger Links with Other Objectives

- **Objective 3:** Address land-sea and sea-land interactions.
- **Objective 4:** Promote climate-smart MSP.
- **Objective 5:** Emphasize the importance of national blue economy strategies as part of the MSP process.
- **Objective 6:** Strengthen MSP's governance role.

Agenda Item 3: Position paper on MSP: Advancing Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Mediterranean

During the meeting, the initial concept for the position paper titled "Advancing Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Mediterranean" was presented to the WG members. This paper will serve as the foundation for drafting the Terms of Reference (ToR) and action plan for the WG, as well as for the overall implementation of MSP within the framework of the Barcelona Convention.

Initial concept of the Position paper is composed of the following main elements:

- **Current status of MSP in the Mediterranean**
 - Achievements
 - Challenges
 - Gaps
- **Existing regional mechanisms**
- **Key priorities to operationalise MSP across the Mediterranean**
 - Governance
 - Operational level (ecosystem approach, climate change adaptation, LSI, green transition...)
- **Recommendations**

- Governance level
- Practical implementation
- **Way forward**

Annotated outline of the Position paper will be shared with the WG members for their concrete inputs and comments.

Agenda Item 4: Conclusions and Next steps

Following the fruitful discussion, it was noted that some participants will submit additional written comments, which will be integrated into the meeting report. The next, and final meeting of the WG dealing with MSSD, will be held online in the second week of March, with the exact date to be communicated to members following the MCSD meeting.

Next Steps & Timeline

- The first draft of the updated MSSD will be discussed at the upcoming MCSD meeting on 12–13 February in Istanbul.
- Additional inputs from WG meeting will be included in the discussions.
- The Mediterranean Commission will finalize the text, with key milestones:
 - late March 2025: an online stakeholder consultation planned to gather further inputs;
 - April 2025: MCSD Steering Committee Meeting;
 - June 2025: 21st MCSD Meeting (final approval of MSSD update);
 - December 2025: Endorsement at COP24 in Cairo, Egypt.

Meeting agenda

9.30 – 9.40	<p>Opening and Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Brief introductions○ Objectives of the meeting
9.40 – 11.40	<p>MSSD Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Presentation: Introduction and initial proposal on regional and national activities○ Discussion and technical inputs for the proposals on regional and national activities
11.40 – 11.50	<p>Position Paper for MSP in the Mediterranean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Presentation: Outline and key components; links with MSSD○ Discussion and input from participants
11.50 - 12.00	<p>AOB</p> <p>Conclusions and Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Summary of key takeaways○ Action points and timeline○ Closing Remarks

List of participants

COUNTRY	INSTITUTION	NAME
Cyprus	Integrated Maritime Policy and Spatial Planning Division Shipping Deputy Ministry	Mr Kyriakos Aliouris
European Commission, DG MARE	DG MARE European Commission	Ms Eleni Hatziyanni
Greece	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Ms Elena Lalou
		Ms Anna Spyropoulou
Israel	Ministry of Environmental Protection	Ms Yehudit Mosseri
		Mr Fred Arzoine
Italy	Ministry of Environment and Energy Security	Mr Riccardo Piraccini
Lebanon	Ministry of Environment	Mr Adel Yacoub
Malta	Planning Authority	Ms Michelle Borg
Slovenia	Ministry of the Natural Resources and Spatial Planning	Ms Lenca Humerca-Šolar
Spain	Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge	Ms Aurora Victoria Mesa Fraile
Tunisia	APAL	Ms Raja Abdelmalek
Türkiye	Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change	Ms. Tutku Karadoğan
		Ms. Özlem Örme
	MedCITIES (Municipality of Genoa)	Ms Stefania Manca
	UNEP/MAP CU	Ms Patrizia Busolini
	UNEP/MAP PAP/RAC	Ms Veronique Evers
		Ms Marina Markovic
		Mr Ivan Sekovski