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6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group

Athens, Greece, 11 September 2017

**Report of the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group**

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UNEP/MAP  
Athens, 2017

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## Introduction

1. The 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group took place in Athens, Greece, on 11 September 2017. The Meeting aimed to (i) take stock of the activities and main achievements in the framework of the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap since its adoption by the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 15, Almeria, Spain, 15-18 January 2008), (ii) review a number of important documents related to key aspects of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap implementation, including the IMAP Common Indicator Guidance Factsheets, the Quality Status Report and the gap analysis of regional measures, and (iii) discuss and provide guidance on the way forward to ensure full implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap by the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) - Barcelona Convention system.

## Participation

2. The following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention were represented at the meeting: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Union, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey.

3. The following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, convention secretariats 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) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

4. The following non-governmental organizations and other institutions were represented as observers: the Hellenic Marine Environment Protection Association (HELMPEA); and the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE).

5. The UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat was represented, including its Coordinating Unit, MED POL Programme, the Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC), the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC), the Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre (PB/RAC), the Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication (INFO/RAC) and the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC).

6. The list of participants is attached as Annex I to this report.

## Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting, Adoption of the Agenda and Election of Officers

7. The meeting was opened at 9:30 a.m. on 11 September 2017 by the Coordinator of UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention, Mr. Gaetano Leone.

8. In his opening statement, Mr. Leone, reviewed the progress achieved since the start of the process related to the Ecosystem Approach in the Mediterranean, and thanked the participants for the scientific, policy input provided to the process, which resulted in the draft Mediterranean Quality Status Report 2017 (2017 MED QSR), which is a key step for the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap.

9. In accordance with rule 20 of the Rules of Procedure, the meeting elected its officers, as follows:

- Ms. Nazli Yenal, Turkey, Chair;
- Mr. Mohamed Osman, Egypt, Vice-Chair;
- Mr. Mitja Bricelj, Slovenia, Vice-Chair;
- Ms. Maria del Sagrario Arrieta Algarra, Spain, Vice-Chair;

- Mr. Mohamed Sghaier Ben Jeddou, Tunisia, Vice-Chair
- Mr. Ali Elkekli, Libya, Rapporteur.

10. During the adoption of the Agenda, it was agreed to include under Any Other Business, presentations by GFCM, on their ongoing fisheries assessment work (relevant to IMAP common indicators under Ecological Objective 3), and by PB/RAC, on the ongoing input of the Science-Policy Interface component of EcAp MED II project into the implementation of IMAP.

11. The meeting adopted the Agenda as in Annex II to this report, including the revised timetable.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Review of Quality Status Report (QSR)**

12. The MAP Coordinator introducing the draft 2017 MED QSR, as one of the main deliverables of the Secretariat for the biennium 2016-2017 based on the COP 19 mandate, highlighted the importance of data based assessment reporting and briefly presented the challenges and bottlenecks (e.g. knowledge gaps) identified during the preparation of 2017 MED QSR, as well as the proposals to overcome them.

13. Ms. Jelena Knezevic, MED POL Programme Officer briefly presented the process followed for the preparation of 2017 MED QSR, the main findings on the current status of the marine environment, as well as the knowledge gaps and key messages identified. The Secretariat also presented the policy recommendations drawn from the 2017 MED QSR, as noted in the draft Decision prepared for submission to the MAP Focal Points Meeting. As part of the presentation of the 2017 MED QSR Chapter related to pollution and marine litter, REMPEC presented the findings for Common Indicator 19. PAP/RAC and SPA/RAC presented the 2017 MED QSR Chapters related to coast and hydrography and to biodiversity and non-indigenous species, respectively.

14. Participants provided general and specific comments on the draft 2017 MED QSR. They welcomed and acknowledged the efforts leading to the preparation of the draft 2017 MED QSR, including the mobilization of national expertise through the COR MONs and the submission of a considerable number of case studies. They pointed out the need for and requested more involvement of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group throughout the process in the development of 2023 MED QSR.

15. Participants welcomed the 2017 MED QSR findings and key messages and requested the Secretariat to adjust Annex II of Document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.443/9 (draft Decision of 2017 MED QSR), to ensure that the formulation of the key messages and knowledge gaps are identical to the text of the draft 2017 MED QSR for each Common Indicator.

16. The meeting highlighted the need to start developing and implementing as soon as possible a list of actions, to be prepared by the Secretariat in close consultation with the EcAp Coordination Group, for delivering quality assured data and related assessment at national, sub-regional and regional levels. In this respect, particular attention for the upcoming assessment should be given to EO4, EO6 and other common indicators / Ecological Objectives, which are currently not included in IMAP and in 2017 MED QSR.

17. Several Contracting Parties informed the meeting on comments already provided, or to be provided, to the Secretariat in written format, expecting these to be fully taken into account in the revised version of the draft 2017 MED QSR. Furthermore, a number of suggestions were made regarding indicators. More specifically, it was suggested that there is space for further improvement of the assessment findings related to Common Indicators 1, 2 and 6. Also, that the status of Common Indicator 15 and Candidate Indicator 25 should be re-assessed, noting that there is not enough knowledge on impacts on hydrographic alterations of Mediterranean habitats, while on the other hand, there may be sufficient data to monitor already Candidate Common Indicator 25.

18. Several Contracting Parties stressed that the next QSR (2023 MED QSR) should include more in-depth analysis on sub-regional specifics and establish stronger linkages between the state, impact and pressures affecting marine and coastal environment. One Contracting Party specifically welcomed the GEF-Adriatic ongoing project, as a complimentary project to the ongoing EcAp-MEDII project, and highlighted the importance of further sub-regional and regional meetings, trainings and capacity building, including the exchange of best practices, for further and strengthened IMAP implementation.

19. Participants also welcomed ongoing efforts of the Secretariat to assist the national implementation of IMAP, while some Contracting Parties highlighted that further capacity development and support would be needed in this field.

20. The Secretariat, with support from the representative of GRID Geneva, presented to the Meeting the proposed layout of the online 2017 MED QSR.

21. The Secretariat also presented under this agenda item the proposal on assessment criteria and possible thresholds discussed during the MED POL Focal Points meeting, and laid out possible ways forward in relation to their use and submission to COP 20.

22. Welcoming the work undertaken on the assessment criteria and thresholds, the meeting concluded to encourage Contracting Parties to test them for regional and national assessment purposes and to encourage the upcoming MAP Focal Points Meeting to consider them in a possible draft Decision for COP 20, as an evolving document to be updated on a continuous basis, based on the implementation of IMAP.

23. The main conclusions and recommendations regarding this agenda item are presented in Annex III.

**Agenda item 2: Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap**

24. Ms. Tatjana Hema, Deputy Coordinator, presented document UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG. 444/4 on the status of implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap adopted by COP 15, as well as the status of implementation of different actions, provided for by the Ecosystem Approach related Decisions adopted by the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Meetings of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 17, Paris, France, 8-10 February 2012, and COP 19, Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016, respectively).

25. In addition, the Deputy Coordinator also presented document UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG. 444/3, comprising the main outcomes of the gap analysis of regional measures and outlining of potential new/updated measures to achieve and/or maintain Good Environmental Status.

26. Participants acknowledged the progress achieved for the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap and the achievement of outputs provided in the Ecosystem Approach related Decisions of the Contracting Parties under the Barcelona Convention.

27. One Contracting Party, speaking on behalf of a group, encouraged the Secretariat to start envisaging key activities and outputs for the next cycle, with a focus on IMAP implementation and 2023 MED QSR and negotiations of new/updated regional measures.

28. Several Contracting Parties highlighted the need to consider possible synergies between the Ecosystem Approach and ocean related developments of the Agenda 2030 implementation, in consultation with the EcAp Coordination Group.

29. It was requested to complement the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap with additional information on how the ecosystem approach governance structure

of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention (as defined in Annex V of Decision IG.21/3), as well as relevant projects, contribute to the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap.

30. The ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat congratulated UNEP/MAP for the hard work and noted the close collaboration between the two Secretariats for developing noise related indicators under EO11. The ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat reaffirmed its willingness to continue, increase and deepen collaboration on this topic with UNEP/MAP, in particular in the context of the implementation of the Quietmed project.

31. The meeting concluded on the need to focus during the implementation of Ecosystem Approach Roadmap in the current cycle (i.e. until 2021) on the following issues: a) strengthened implementation of IMAP at national level, b) filling the gaps for the preparation of the upcoming 2023 MED QSR, c) further work on defining assessment criteria to assess GES, and d) the implementation of existing measures as well as development of new, or upgrade of existing, measures, with a clear time table for their negotiation and implementation, while also taking into account the envisioned key findings of the future 2023 MED QSR.

32. The main conclusions and recommendations regarding this agenda item are presented in Annex III.

### **Agenda item 3: Review of proposed IMAP Common Indicator Guidance Facts Sheets**

33. Ms. Gyorgyi Gurban, Ecosystem Approach Project Manager, presented the process leading up to the development of the different Guidance Fact Sheets and their current state of play, as well as the ongoing work on the development of the IMAP InfoSystem, and the next steps to be undertaken to make it fully operational.

34. The participants endorsed the IMAP Guidance Fact Sheets, noting their constantly evolving nature, as being a solid basis for the further update of national monitoring programmes to be in line with IMAP.

35. Following a presentation prepared by INFO/RAC, participants welcomed the ongoing work on developing an IMAP compatible Information and Data Sharing System.

### **Agenda item 6: Any Other Business**

36. Mr. Paolo Carpentieri, representing the GFCM Secretariat presented the ongoing work on assessment of Ecological Objective 3 and showcased available data and maps with relevance to the draft 2017 MED QSR.

37. Welcoming the ongoing work of GFCM, the meeting requested the two Secretariats to work further closely together and if possible, to integrate a regional assessment of fisheries in 2017 MED QSR, in line with assessment undertaken and provided by GFCM.

38. Mr. Jean-Pierre Giraud, representing PB/RAC, presented the key achievements on Science-Policy Interface, noting that focus of ongoing work is on IMAP implementation, with specific topics addressed jointly by scientists and policy makers, such as the risk-based approach implementation in practice, scales of assessment and other highly relevant topics.

39. Following the presentation of PB/RAC, participants welcomed the ongoing efforts to close the existing science-policy gap in relation to knowledge and data gathered by ongoing projects and considering policy makers needs for IMAP implementation. They also encouraged further involvement of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group in strengthening science-policy interface, also in line with the MTS.

**Agenda item 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

40. Participants adopted the conclusions and recommendations, as contained in Annex III to the present report.

**Agenda item 7: Closure of the Meeting**

41. The Chairperson closed the meeting at 17:30 hours, on 11 September 2017.

**Annex I**  
**List of Participants**



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**Annex II**  
**Agenda of the Meeting**

## **Agenda**

- Agenda item 1.** Opening of the Meeting, Adoption of the Agenda and Election of Officers
- Agenda item 2.** Midterm Review of the Implementation of the EcAp Application Roadmap  
(a) State of Play of Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap;  
(b) Way Forward
- Agenda item 3.** Review of proposed IMAP Common Indicator Guidance Facts Sheets  
  
(a) Pollution and Marine Litter;  
(b) Biodiversity and Fisheries;  
(c) Coast and Hydrography;  
(d) Enabling IMAP Information System
- Agenda item 4.** Review of Quality Status Report (QSR)  
  
(e) Pollution and Marine Litter;  
(f) Biodiversity and Fisheries;  
(g) Coast and Hydrography;  
(h) Cross-cutting and Horizontal Issues
- Agenda item 5.** Conclusions and Recommendations
- Agenda item 6.** Any Other Business
- Agenda item 7.** Closure of the Meeting

**Annex III**  
**Conclusions and Recommendations**

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (the Meeting) took place in Athens, Greece, 11 September 2017.

Following review and discussions of all agenda items, the Meeting agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations:

### Review of the 2017 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2017 MED QSR)

1. Following the Secretariat's presentations on the process followed for the preparation of 2017 MED QSR, on its current status and its main findings and identified gaps, the Meeting welcomed the draft 2017 MED QSR, as prepared by the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (COR MONs), the Secretariat and Components, despite time constraints and data challenges.
2. The Meeting acknowledged the efforts leading to the preparation of the draft 2017 MED QSR, including the mobilization of national expertise through the COR MONs and submissions of a considerable number of case studies and requested for more involvement of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group throughout the process in the development of 2023 MED QSR.
3. The Meeting reviewed the 2017 MED QSR findings and key messages and requested the Secretariat to adjust Annex of Document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.443/9 (draft Decision of 2017 MED QSR) for consistency with the key messages and knowledge gaps presented in the draft 2017 MED QSR for each Ecological Objective.
4. The Meeting stressed that the next QSR (2023 MED QSR) should include more in-depth analysis on sub-regional specifics and establish stronger linkages between the state, impact and pressures affecting marine and coastal environment.
5. The Meeting expressed the importance of implementing as soon as possible a list of actions to be prepared by the Secretariat in close consultation with the EcAp Coordination Group for delivering quality assured data and related assessment at national, sub-regional and regional levels for the 2023 MED QSR.
6. The Meeting emphasized that strengthened national implementation of IMAP and more data collected in a coherent manner and format and provided to the Secretariat are a prerequisite for more complete future assessment products (2023 MED QSR).
7. The Meeting also stressed the need for further capacity building and exchange of best practices, to enable the implementation of IMAP all over the Mediterranean region.
8. The Meeting agreed to the following timetable in relation to the finalization of the 2017 MED QSR:
  - (a) the Secretariat to further update and edit by 25 September 2017 the draft 2017 MED QSR (including all case studies) in line with comments of the Contracting Parties to be received by 15 September 2017 at the latest;
  - (b) the Secretariat to share online 25 September 2017 to 10 October 2017 the revised version of the draft Decision and the amended version of the 2017 MED QSR for final validation of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group Members;

(c) the Secretariat to finalize the Annex to the draft Decision of 2017 MED QSR to enable the timely submission of a strengthened 2017 MED QSR to COP20.

9. The Meeting welcomed the ongoing work of GFCM and requested the Secretariats of UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) and GFCM, to work further closely together and to integrate regional assessment of fisheries indicators also into the draft 2017 MED QSR. For this purpose, GFCM was invited to provide their contribution to the draft 2017 MED QSR, in line with the above timetable.

10. In relation to the proposed assessment criteria and thresholds, the Meeting welcomed the work undertaken, encouraged the Contracting Parties to test them for national assessment purposes and encouraged the upcoming MAP Focal Points Meeting to consider it as a possible Decision for COP 20, as an evolving document to be updated on a continuous basis, based on implementation of IMAP.

### **Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap**

11. The Meeting acknowledged the progress achieved for the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap and the achievement of outputs provided in the Ecosystem Approach related Decisions of the Contracting Parties under the Barcelona Convention. The Meeting encouraged the Secretariat to start envisaging and outlining potential key activities and outputs for the next cycle of Ecosystem Approach Roadmap implementation, considering possible synergies between Ecosystem Approach and ocean related developments of the Agenda 2030 implementation for timely discussions at the EcAp Coordination Group meeting during the 2018-2019 biennium. The meeting requested to complete the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap with information on the contribution of the Governance structure of the MAP/Barcelona Convention system to the implementation of Ecosystem Approach Roadmap as well as on other regional relevant projects.

12. The Meeting encouraged further work on the implementation of Ecosystem Approach Roadmap in the current cycle (until 2021), focusing on the strengthened implementation of IMAP at national level, filling the gap for the preparation of the upcoming 2023 MED QSR, further work on defining assessment criteria to assess GES, the implementation of existing measures as well as development of new or upgrade of existing measures with clear time table for their negotiation and implementation while taking into account also the envisioned key findings of the future 2023 MED QSR.

13. The Meeting specifically encouraged further work on assessment criteria to ensure coherence and to improve coordination between the data bases of UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention and other regional or international data-bases with similar parameters;

### **Review of Proposed IMAP Common Indicator Guidance Facts Sheets**

14. The Meeting endorsed the IMAP Guidance Fact Sheets as living documents and welcomed the ongoing work on developing an IMAP compatible Information and Data Sharing System.

### **Any Other Business**

The Meeting highlighted the importance of science-policy interface for the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap and considered appropriate to further develop means for the involvement of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group in science-policy interlinkages, as well as the development of a summary of most relevant projects ongoing which can assist Contracting Parties in their efforts to implement IMAP.