



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

Third meeting of the Working Group for MSP

Online, 20 March 2025

Meeting report

Introduction

The third meeting of the Working Group for MSP, held online on 20 March 2025, focused on providing technical contributions for the preparation of the Position paper: Advancing MSP in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, participants were informed about the progress in preparation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD). The meeting gathered 18 participants from Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy Lebanon, Malta, Montenegro, Slovenia, Tunisia, Türkiye, DG MARE European Commission, MedCITIES 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 presenting the agenda (Annex 1).

Participants were once again updated on the status of the Working Group, emphasizing that the MSP WG continues to function as an informal body supporting the MSSD update process. However, this meeting marks the final discussion on the MSSD update, as the group gradually transitions into a formal Working Group composed of representatives from the Contracting Parties. Its focus will be on implementing the [COP23 Decision IG.26/10](#) on the Conceptual Framework for Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean. Given this transition, it is crucial for members to attend the upcoming in-person meeting in Athens, where the group's Terms of Reference will also be discussed.

Agenda Item 2: MSSD update

Participants received a brief update on the MSSD process, noting that the Thematic Ad-hoc Meeting of the MCSD took place on 12–13 February 2025 in Istanbul, Türkiye. The meeting aimed to facilitate a thematic discussion on the first draft of the updated MSSD, including its flagship initiatives, as well as the initial elements of the revised Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas (RCCAF).

The next MCSD Meeting is scheduled for the end of June, where the final version of the Strategy will be presented. The final updated MSSD document will be prepared ahead of the 21st MCSD Meeting to allow sufficient time for internal consultations at the national level for MCSD country members.

Participants were also reminded on the final conclusions from the 2nd WG meeting where it was highlighted to:

- Reinforce MSP as a key governance tool by
 - Integrating the ecosystem approach into different stages of planning to support the achievement of GES
 - Aligning sectoral policies with environmental protection goals, ensuring they contribute to achieving GES
 - Recommending SEA as a supporting framework for environmentally responsible MSP, where applicable.
 - Promoting sustainable use by reducing user conflicts and supporting Mediterranean blue economy efforts, providing guidance for sectors towards green transition, encouraging the development and use of NBS
- Enhance MSP-related capacity building through
 - Technical guidance

- Exchange of experience; MSP WG
- Strengthen social dimension of MSP
- Ensure links of objective 1 and other objectives addressing
 - Land-sea interactions, blue economy strategies, climate smart MSP, governance

It was also pointed out that current Objective 1 in the Strategy will become Objective 2, while Climate changes, given its global priority will move as Objective 1.

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

During the meeting, annotated outline 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 the overall implementation of MSP within the framework of the Barcelona Convention as well as an input for drafting the Terms of Reference (ToR) and action plan for the WG.

It was also highlighted that the Position Paper should be a concise, targeted document highlighting the most relevant elements for MSP under the Barcelona Convention (BC) and not detailed study analysis different MSP-related elements.

Position paper will be composed of the following main elements:

Current State of MSP in the Mediterranean

- Context
 - Addressing Barcelona Convention MSP-related framework
- Achievements:
 - Development and ongoing implementation of MSPs.
 - Additional studies focusing on blue economy, particularly in non-EU countries.
- Challenges:
 - Environmental pressures from coastal and maritime activities.
 - Need to regulate maritime economy towards sustainability.
 - Governance complexities, including divergent national priorities, stakeholder engagement, spatial data availability, policy integration, difficulties and differences among countries in addressing cross-border cooperation.
- Gaps:
 - Governance related gaps such as lack of legislation, institutional fragmentation, and limited community engagement.
 - Financial constraints affecting MSP implementation.
 - Limited capacity, knowledge, and tools for effective MSP application.

Other Regional Mechanisms Supporting MSP including:

- Med MSP COP
- Union for the Mediterranean
- West MED Initiative
- EUSAIR

Key Priorities for MSP Development

- Governance-related Priorities:
 - Enhancing MSP's role in achieving global environmental targets.
 - Strengthening national MSP processes.
 - Promoting a harmonized regional approach to MSP.
 - Capacity building.
- Practical Implementation:
 - Ecosystem Approach: Integrating GES, conservation, restoration targets, and SEA.
 - Climate Change: Implementing anticipatory planning, coastal infrastructure development, NBS, and sectoral adaptation measures.
 - Coastal and Marine Planning - ICZM Dimension: Addressing land-sea interactions, multi-level governance cooperation, and planning integration.
 - Blue Economy: Utilizing MSP to foster sustainable blue economy practices aligned with EGD and the green transition.
 - Space Constraints and Conflict Management: Addressing emerging maritime activities' spatial demands and ensuring sectoral coexistence.
 - Social Sustainability: Enhancing community well-being and integrating traditional maritime activities such as small-scale fisheries and cultural heritage.

Recommendations for Enhancing Cross-Regional MSP Initiatives

- Governance Aspects:
 - Strengthening MSP WG's role in fostering cooperation.
 - Encouraging national MSP processes to practice on best national and regional projects. Finding a balanced approach suitable across the region.
- Practical Implementation:
 - Promoting data sharing and utilizing existing platforms.
 - Expanding capacity-building efforts through training and best practice dissemination.
 - Raising awareness and initiating pilot projects to test innovative MSP applications.

The Way Forward A structured roadmap initial covering the period 2026-2030 (potentially extending to 2035) will be developed and discussed further in upcoming meetings, including one in Athens.

During the discussion with WG members, the following key elements were emphasised:

- MSP is a strategic planning process encompassing mission, vision, objectives, and measures. This should be strongly highlighted. National authorities, particularly in countries that have not yet initiated the process, could require support for implementation.
- While the green economy is important, its application is often inconsistent and not always truly sustainable. Harmonizing the blue economy with environmental protection remains a challenge. Furthermore, the blue economy has a significant social dimension that needs to be adequately addressed.
- Governance remains an important topic, as aligning different plans and programs during implementation continues to be a challenge. In addition, there are differences in implementation approaches that must be acknowledged and respected.
- Specific challenges related to social and political aspects should be highlighted, including policy priorities, tight timeframes, funding constraints, and fragmented competencies (even within the environmental sector itself).
- The document should emphasize links with SDGs and BBNJ.

- A clear distinction should be made between gaps and challenges:
 - o Challenges could focus on governance and socio-political differences in implementation.
 - o Gaps could highlight technical and operational needs, such as the lack of tools, data, and related resources.
- The Regional Mechanism chapter should include sectoral institutions such as GFCM and MedPAN.
- The inclusion of SEA is relevant but should respect national differences and not be presented as the sole foundation for environmental considerations
- In the future, the WG could take on a more technical role by providing a framework to support cooperation, supporting development of regional tools and approaches, and facilitating practical MSP implementation at the national level.

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 Annotated outline. The next meeting will take place in Atnes, on 5th May, back-to-back with PAP/RAC National Focal Points meeting.

Annex 1: Meeting agenda

10.00 – 10.10	Opening and Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Brief introductions○ Objectives of the meeting
10.10 – 10.30	MSSD Update <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Update on the current MSSD process○ Overall discussion
10.30 – 11.30	Position Paper for MSP in the Mediterranean <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Presentation: Annotated Outline; links with MSSD○ Discussion and input from participants
11.30 – 11.45	AOB Conclusions and Next Steps

Annex 2: List of participants

COUNTRY	INSTITUTION	NAME
Cyprus	Integrated Maritime Policy and Spatial Planning Division Shipping Deputy Ministry	Mr Kyriakos Aliouris
		Mr Nicolas Ioannou
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
Montenegro	Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development	Ms Milica Rudic
Slovenia	Ministry of the Natural Resources and Spatial Planning	Ms Lenca Humerca-Šolar
Tunisia	APAL	Ms Raja Abdelmalek
Türkiye	Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change	Ms. Özlem Öorme
	MedCITIES (Municipality of Genoa)	Ms Stefania Manca
	UNEP/MAP PAP/RAC	Ms Veronique Evers
		Ms Marina Markovic
		Ms Martina Bocci, the expert