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Seventeenth Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

Istanbul, Türkiye, 20-22 May 2025

**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 the biennial period 2024-2025**

**Report of the Fourth meeting of the *Ad hoc* Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM)**

SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE (SPA/RAC)  
*Ad hoc* Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM)  
Fourth meeting  
Teleconference, 21 March 2025

## Meeting minutes of the Fourth AGEM meeting

### 21 March 2025, teleconference

#### I. Introduction

1. The meeting marked the beginning of a new *Ad hoc* Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) mandate to support the Barcelona Convention's Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) and the Contracting Parties to progress with the marine protected areas (MPAs) agenda in the Mediterranean.
2. Established on a pilot basis in 2018-2019 and formally launched in 2020 by Decision IG.24/6 of the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 21; Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019), AGEM has contributed significantly to the development of the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean, adopted by COP 22 (Antalya, Türkiye, 7-10 December 2021).
3. The AGEM's Terms of Reference were reviewed and submitted to the Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity (SPA/BD) for feedback and approval in late 2024. In January 2025, the revised Terms of Reference were formally approved by the SPA/BD Focal Points and are presented in Annex I to this report.
4. AGEM includes 16 independent experts in 8 areas of expertise: MPA management, MPA planning, Marine biology/ecology, Law and regulation, Socio-economics, Fisheries, Nature-based tourism, and Financing; as well as representatives of the scientific bodies of 5 relevant partner organizations: the Scientific Committee of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS), the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Scientific Committee of the Network of Marine Protected Areas Managers in the Mediterranean (MedPAN), the Marine working group of the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA Marine) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the marine conservation team of the Mediterranean Programme of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF Mediterranean).
5. The list of the AGEM members is available in Annex II.

6. The group aims to provide expert guidance and support the implementation of the Post-2020 Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs. Key deliverables for 2025 include developing Mediterranean guidance for OECMs, documenting the impacts of MPAs with enhanced protection levels, and identifying MPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

7. The meeting focused on agreeing on the AGEM programme of work for 2025 and also on identifying the 2026-2027 priorities for the Barcelona Convention and SPA/RAC. Key points included the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy, the MPA status report, jointly prepared with MedPAN, and the need for other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs).

## **II. The Fourth AGEM meeting**

### **Introduction**

8. The SPA/RAC convened the Fourth meeting of the *Ad hoc* group of experts for marine protected areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM), on 21 March 2025, by teleconference.

9. All the group members have been invited to attend. A complete list of participants is set out in Annex III to the present report.

10. SPA/RAC acted as secretariat to the meeting. Presentation support of the meeting is available here: [PPT 4th AGEM meeting 21 March 2025.pdf](#)

11. The meeting aimed mainly at:

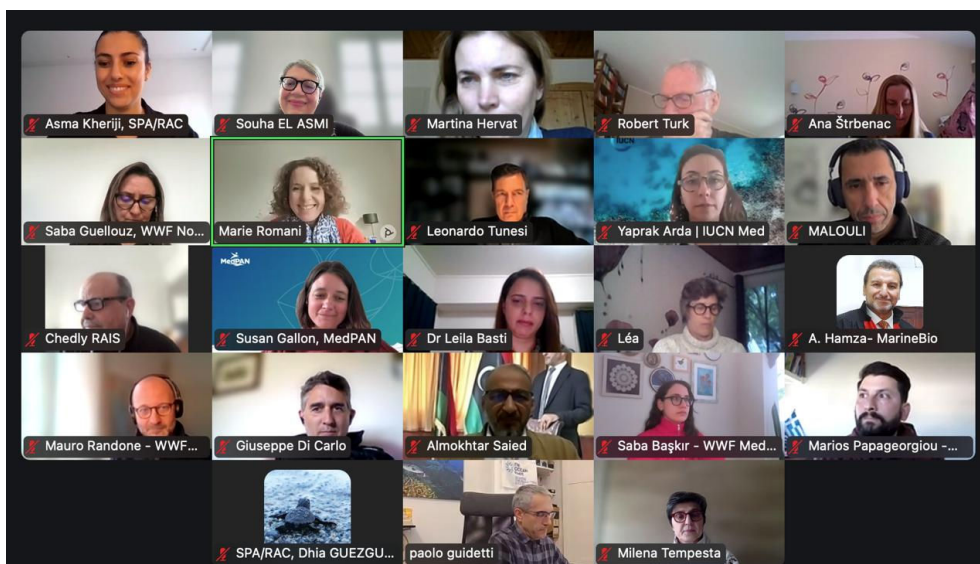
- Presenting the SPA/RAC and its SPA Programme of Work;
- Introducing the AGEM ToRs and members;
- Discussing and agreeing on the AGEM PoW for 2025;
- Discussing and agreeing on key priorities for the 2026-2027 Biennium.

### **Agenda item 1. Opening of the meeting**

12. The meeting was opened at 2.00 p.m. UTC+1, on Friday 21 March 2025, by Ms. Asma KHERIJI, Programme Officer (SPAs) at SPA/RAC, who welcomed the participants on behalf of the SPA/RAC Director, Mr. Elyes HAMZA, and thanked them for having accepted to join the ad hoc group of experts. She pointed out the heavy, although important, AGEM mandate, and its pertinence to support the SPA/RAC Secretariat and Contracting Parties to progress with the post-2020 marine protected areas agenda in the Mediterranean.

13. All the meeting documents were available on the following web page: <https://spa-rac.org/fr/reunion/30/groupe-ad-hoc-d-experts-pour-les-aires-marines-protegees-en-mediterranee-agem-quatrieme-reunion-teleconference-21-mars-2025>

14. The AGEM members introduced themselves and briefly described their background, affiliation, expectations and interests.



**A group photo of the AGEM members participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting (21 March 2025)**

## **Agenda item 2. Organizational matters**

15. The SPA/RAC Secretariat briefly presented the SPA/RAC mission, its Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) programme, and the AGEM background, objectives, composition, and functioning modalities.

16. Based on a proposal by the Secretariat made in accordance with the principles of geographical and gender representation, the AGEM elected a Chair and a Vice-Chair from among its members, as follows:

- Chair: Mr. Robert TURK (Nature conservation expert from Slovenia), and
- Vice-Chair: Ms. Souha EL ASMI (Marine environment and policy expert from Tunisia).

17. The Chair and Vice-Chair expressed their willingness to take on the roles and thanked the group for their trust.

18. The AGEM members adopted their agenda based on the provisional agenda. The meeting Agenda appears in Annex IV to this report.

## **Agenda item 3. Programme of work of the AGEM for 2025 and key priorities for the biennium 2026-2027**

### **a) Programme of Work of the AGEM for 2025**

19. The Secretariat introduced this agenda item by presenting the draft Programme of work of the AGEM for 2025 for review and feedback from the members.

20. The proposed deliverables to be guided by the AGEM are subscribed in the SPA/RAC PoW for 2024-2025 adopted by the Barcelona Convention COP 23, and aim to strengthen regional cooperation, and support sustainable governance of Mediterranean marine biodiversity. These are the following:

- **Deliverable 1: Mediterranean Guidance on OECMs:** Supporting the development of a regional guidance document to apply OECM criteria and to establish processes for identifying OECM in the Mediterranean, accompanied by a regional webinar to disseminate the guidance.

- **Deliverable 2: Impact of MCPAs with Enhanced Protection Levels:** Documentation and communication of the ecological and socio-economic impacts of MCPAs with enhanced protection levels.
- **Deliverable 3: Identification of potential international/transboundary MPAs in open waters:** Support countries in identifying potential international/transboundary Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in open waters.

#### ***Comments on Deliverable 1: Mediterranean Guidance on OECMs***

21. The Secretariat informed the meeting that the SPA/RAC hired a consultant to work on the elaboration of the Mediterranean Guidance on OECM, and that this document will be submitted to the seventeenth SPA/BD Focal Points Meeting on 20-22 May 2025 for review and comments.

22. A member stated that the GFCM is currently working on OECMs. Some of the Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRAs) could be reported as OECMs. He proposed to share the work undertaken by GFCM (tools, outcomes of meetings, etc.) to feed the SPA/RAC and AGEM's work.

#### ***Comments on Deliverable 2: Impact of MCPAs with Enhanced Protection Levels***

23. The Secretariat informed the meeting that this deliverable would be elaborated internally with the support of a specific working group on Enhanced Protection Levels (WG-EP). The Chair proposed to AGEM to form a specific Working Group on Enhanced Protection Levels, to lead the elaboration and drafting of the document.

24. A member suggests starting the work on the impact of MPAs with enhanced protection levels by collecting case studies and documentation.

25. A member proposed to AGEM to share with the SPA/RAC ideas and documents related to the MCPAs with enhanced protection levels to feed the work to be done.

#### ***Comments on Deliverable 3: Identification of potential international/transboundary MPAs in open waters***

26. The Secretariat informed the meeting that this deliverable will be carried out by a SPA/RAC consultant to be hired in the coming period, and AGEM will ensure guiding the process of its elaboration and review.

27. Deliverable 3 was first proposed as "Identify potential Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) in Areas Beyond National Jurisdictions (ABNJs)".

28. A member proposed to focus the work on identifying new MPAs, coastal or in open water, rather than SPAMIs in ABNJs because of the complexity of the ABNJ issue in the Mediterranean. He also proposed that, as a second step, we can identify among these identified MPAs those that could be suitable to be declared as SPAMIs. Furthermore, he recalled that the SPA/RAC mission is to support countries in such processes.

29. A member supported the proposal and insisted on the fact that the work should not focus on ABNJs.

30. Another member specified that if any potential MPAs were identified in ABNJs, these would be so small and thus not interesting in comparison with the efforts put in this complex process and impact that it would have.

31. It was thus pointed out to work on international and/or transboundary MPAs in open waters rather than in ABNJs, considering the particularity of the Mediterranean region regarding the ABNJs issue. The applicability of the High seas treaty in the Mediterranean was also raised.

32. A member pointed out this work could be a first step toward declaring the first transboundary MPA in the Mediterranean (that is coastal or in open waters).

33. Another member recalled the fact that a SPAMI should be declared as MPA first, which supports the idea of commencing with identifying MPAs in open water, then selecting those that are suitable to be declared as SPAMIs.

34. A member proposed involving experts from IUCN's Transboundary Conservation Specialist Group in the work on the Deliverable 3.

35. Another member proposed that the SPA/RAC share the ToRs related to the study with AGEM for review and comments.

#### ***Final Remarks on the Programme of Work of AGEM for 2025***

36. The group agreed to proceed with the AGEM Programme of work for 2025, including the proposed revisions, and to immediately start guiding the process of the OECM guidance elaboration.

37. The final Programme of work of the AGEM for 2025 is available in Annex V.

#### **b) AGEM Key Priorities for AGEM during the biennium 2026-2027**

38. The AGEM discussed the key priorities for the 2026-2027 biennium that were presented by the Secretariat.

39. Based on the draft 2026-2027 SPA/RAC Programme of Work, the AGEM Terms of Reference, and in line with the MCPA and OECM Strategy, the following four key topics have been identified as priority areas for AGEM to focus on during 2026-2027 biennium, ensuring alignment with regional conservation objectives and ongoing initiatives:

- ***Key priority 1:*** The MCPAs and OECMs Strategy mid-term evaluation;
- ***Key priority 2:*** MPAs Status report;
- ***Key priority 3:*** OECMs identification, recognition and reporting;
- ***Key priority 4:*** MCPAs coverage and representativity.

#### ***Comments on Key priority 1: The MCPAs and OECMs Strategy mid-term evaluation***

40. The Secretariat highlighted the fact that the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean should undertake a mid-term assessment in 2026 (by COP 23 Decision IG.26/5). It was also indicated that the Strategy assessment should be submitted to the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points in mid-2027. The preparation of this deliverable should start in early 2026 and finish not later than March 2027.

41. The evaluation will be carried out by SPA/RAC with the support of external consultants. It is then expected that the AGEM will closely follow the elaboration of the assessment starting from early 2026 and should be completed no later than March 2027.

42. It was also recalled that AGEM has guided and closely followed the elaboration of the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean in 2020-2021, as well as its Evaluation and Monitoring Framework in 2022-2023.

### ***Comments on Key priority 2: MPA Status Report***

43. The Secretariat recalled that the MPA Status report is jointly developed by SPA/RAC and MedPAN and informed that it will be presented during the 4th edition of the Mediterranean MPA Forum to be jointly organized during 2027.

44. The representative of MedPAN specified that the data collection has been finalized, and that the data sets will be validated by the SPA/BD Focal Points, before they will feed the Database on MPAs in the Mediterranean (MAPAMED), co-property of SPA/RAC and MedPAN.

45. The analysis of the data collected will be carried out in 2025, with the report expected to be ready in 2026.

46. A member raised a question of the misalignment of the MAPAMED data with those in WDPa (Protected Planet). MedPAN indicated that this could be caused by update cycles and methodologies.

47. A member proposed to support countries reporting on OECMs and to include the OECMs in the MPAs Status report and thus in MAPAMED.

48. One member pointed out that the OECMs should be reported to the CBD, and another member added that we should wait for OECMs to be officially reported in the Mediterranean to include them in MAPAMED and MPAs Status report.

49. A member highlighted the importance of the report in shaping new recommendations and actions for MPAs in the Mediterranean, in particular with regards to the quality of protection and the management effectiveness of the areas to guarantee meeting the set global and regional Targets.

### ***Comments on Key priority 3: OECMs Identification, Recognition, and Reporting***

50. The Secretariat presented the key priority on OECMs and proposed to continue working on OECMs in the next biennium, based on the to be elaborated OECMs guidance in the Mediterranean, possibly through webinars and other tools.

51. The Chair highlighted that SPA/RAC with its partners should be leading this work, and discussed the need for proactive engagement with countries to convince them to work on OECMs.

52. A member suggests adding a dynamic aspect to the work, such as transferring good practices and creating a community of practice.

53. Some members recalled that some countries are not aware of the OECMs concept, while others are not interested in pursuing it.

54. A member highlighted the need for a position paper at the EU level to address issues like monitoring and regulatory frameworks.

55. Another member suggests identifying a voluntary country to run a process of OECMs identification and serve as a model for others.

#### ***Comments on Key priority 4: MPAs Coverage and Representativity***

56. While presenting this key priority, the Secretariat specified its objective, which is narrowing the gap and enhancing the MCPAs coverage in the Mediterranean and supporting through technical and scientific guidance the assessment of the representativity of the Mediterranean MPAs network.

57. The Chair approved the added value of this key deliverable, and indicated that this is the main goal of the Mediterranean: Preserving the region by declaring MPAs that are ecologically representative and effectively managed.

58. A member suggested adding a discussion on funding gaps and exploring new funding mechanisms for MPAs.

59. Another member noted the importance of addressing both MPAs coverage and management funding.

60. A member mentioned the potential of using technical support centers for CBD and initiatives like Act 30 to boost efforts.

#### ***Final Remarks on the Key priorities of AGEM for 2026-2027 biennium***

61. The group agreed to proceed with the AGEM Key priorities for 2026-2027, and to further identify specific actions and outcomes in early 2026.

62. The AGEM key priorities for 2026-2027 biennium is available in Annex V.

#### **Agenda item 4. Follow-up after the meeting and next milestones/meetings**

63. The meeting concludes with a commitment to work collaboratively and effectively towards achieving the AGM's objectives.

64. The Chair proposed forming a Working Group on Enhanced Protection and discussing it during the next OECMs guidance meeting.

65. The Secretariat informed the meeting that it would circulate a Doodle for the next OECMs meeting and share the OECMs guidance draft document for review.

#### **Agenda item 5. Closure of the meeting**

66. The secretariat thanked the Chair for his brilliant facilitation and all the members for their time and commitment.

67. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.40 p.m. UTC+1, on Friday, 21 March 2025.



## **Annex I**

# ***Ad hoc* Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM)**

## ***Terms of reference***

### **I. The *Ad hoc* Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM): Rationale and objectives**

1. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are recognized as an efficient tool for the conservation of the marine environment as well as for the management of living resources. Their role in delivering ecosystem services and ensuring sustainability of a wide range of human activities (tourism, fisheries, recreation, education, etc.) is also increasingly recognized. The benefits generated are visible especially when MPAs are managed effectively and have sufficient resources to address local management issues.

2. In the Mediterranean, MPAs exhibit a remarkable diversity in both nature and typology, often closely tied to the legislative frameworks and national and international regulations. Most MPAs were established as standalone sites rather than as part of a cohesive network, which limits their ability to adequately protect the different components of the Mediterranean marine biodiversity. This has resulted in significant gaps in the protection of various critical ecosystems and species.

3. According to the most recent inventory of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas conducted in 2020 by SPA/RAC and MedPAN, 8.3% of the Mediterranean Sea (209,303 km<sup>2</sup>) is designated as MPAs. This includes national MPAs, European marine Natura 2000 sites, and the Pelagos Sanctuary (established through an international agreement). Among the 1,087 designated MPAs, 39 are listed on the List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI List), representing 5.5% of the Mediterranean Sea (138,464 km<sup>2</sup>). Notably, these MPAs are unevenly distributed across regions, with 97.3% located in European Union (EU) waters.

4. Additionally, to date, no marine Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) have been reported for the Mediterranean. For most of these sites, there is limited information on the implementation of management measures. Even when such measures are in place, their effectiveness in achieving conservation targets remains uncertain.

5. It is clear that while the Mediterranean network of MPAs plays a significant role in safeguarding biodiversity hotspots and in protecting numerous natural sites from the adverse effects of human activities, it requires stronger development and implementation efforts. Additionally, most Mediterranean States are committed under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to establish comprehensive, well-managed, effective, and equitably governed systems of ecologically representative and well-connected MPAs and OECMs. This commitment aligns with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) Target 3, which aims to conserve and manage at least 30% of marine and coastal areas by 2030 through well-connected and equitably governed systems of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs).

6. Achieving this target necessitates increasing the total surface area covered by MPAs by extending the boundaries of existing ones, creating new coastal and off-shore MPAs, and establishing additional MPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). It also involves integrating other areas of usage restrictions that could enhance biodiversity conservation, such as fisheries reserves.

Furthermore, improving the management and governance systems of MPAs is essential for their effectiveness and achieving the target mentioned above.

7. In other words, the major challenge for national authorities responsible for MPA planning and management, as well as for the relevant international organizations, in the coming years, will be to enhance the Mediterranean network of MPAs and OECMs in terms of coverage, representativeness, connectivity, and management effectiveness. Additionally, MPAs need to be better integrate into their social and economic contexts, by promoting their recognition in the context of country-led maritime spatial planning and the delivering of ecosystem services such as fisheries, tourism, and resilience to climate change.

8. Addressing these challenges requires that MPA governance be based on the best available knowledge, leveraging expertise and experience from a diverse range of disciplines. This can be accomplished by establishing an *ad hoc* Group of experts that, based on the regular assessment of the status of Mediterranean MPAs, provides guidance to SPA/RAC so as to effectively support countries and international organizations on strengthening the Mediterranean MPA network, ensuring a proper and timely achievement of the GBF, the Post-2020 SAPBIO, and the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs targets. Additionally, it would help meet the Good Environmental Status for the Mediterranean Sea as outlined by the Barcelona Convention Ecosystem Approach process, along with other regional objectives.

9. The initiative to establish an “*ad hoc* Group of experts” stems from the need for a multidisciplinary think tank that can offer guidance and timely recommendations on the planning and management of MPAs. This “*Ad hoc* Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean” (AGEM) was initially created on a pilot-basis in 2018-2019 and was officially adopted by Decision IG.24/6<sup>1</sup> during the 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 21; Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019).

10. According to the COP 21 Decision, the AGEM is a multidisciplinary *ad hoc* Group of experts for marine protected areas in the Mediterranean set up to support the SPA/RAC Secretariat and the Contracting Parties to progress with the 2020 and post-2020 marine protected areas agenda in the Mediterranean and to work on related issues such as preparing guidelines, setting up definitions and measurable indicators, and tailoring global concepts and approaches to the Mediterranean context.

11. One of the primary contributions of the AGEM will be to monitor progress in implementing the “Post-2020 Regional Strategy for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures in the Mediterranean” (“the MCPA and OECM Strategy”) adopted by COP 22 to the Barcelona Convention (Decision IG.25/12<sup>2</sup>) and its Monitoring and Evaluation Framework adopted by COP 23 (Decision IG.26/5<sup>3</sup>), including the Strategy’s two main objectives:

- **By 2030, at least 30 per cent of the Mediterranean Sea is protected and conserved through well connected, ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, ensuring adequate geographical balance, with the focus on areas particularly important for biodiversity.**
- **By 2030, the number and coverage of marine and coastal protected areas with enhanced protection levels is increased, contributing to the recovery of marine ecosystems.**

<sup>1</sup> Decision IG.24/6: [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/31704/19ig24\\_22\\_2406\\_eng.pdf](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/31704/19ig24_22_2406_eng.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Decision IG.25/12: [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/37134/21ig25\\_27\\_2512\\_eng.pdf](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/37134/21ig25_27_2512_eng.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Decision 26/5: [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/44718/23ig26\\_22\\_2605\\_eng.pdf](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/44718/23ig26_22_2605_eng.pdf)

12. It will also act as a think tank to identify the best approaches for achieving the five Strategic Pillars and their related Strategic outcomes of the MCPA and OECM Strategy (as adopted by COP 22) and its Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (as adopted by COP 23):

- **Strategic Pillar 1: MCPA and OECM Governance**  
 ➔ **Strategic Outcome 1:** Governance arrangements for MCPAs and OECMs are inclusive and effective in delivering conservation and livelihood outcomes
- **Strategic Pillar 2: MCPA Network Expansion**  
 ➔ **Strategic Outcome 2:** MCPA coverage increased through the expansion of soundly-designed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of MCPAs
- **Strategic Pillar 3: Strategic Pillar 3: Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures**  
 ➔ **Strategic Outcome 3:** Marine and coastal OECMs in the Mediterranean are identified, recognized and reported towards post-2020 global and regional targets
- **Strategic Pillar 4: MCPA Management Effectiveness**  
 ➔ **Strategic Outcome 4:** MCPAs are effectively managed and their conservation outcomes successfully delivered
- **Strategic Pillar 5: Government and Stakeholder Action and Support**  
 ➔ **Strategic Outcome 5:** Actions and support for MCPAs and OECMs are mobilized

13. The ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) is set to play an instrumental role in supporting SPA/RAC and the Contracting Parties in meeting the ambitious 30x30 conservation target by 2030. This Group's expertise will be vital in identifying priority actions to expand, effectively manage, and connect Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs), as well as Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) across the Mediterranean. AGEM's guidance not only steers SPA/RAC in critical decision-making but also fosters coherence in conservation efforts at regional and national levels. Its strategic insights will help bridge scientific expertise and policy needs, ensuring a more integrated, adaptive approach to conservation that aligns with international objectives under the CBD post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. In the coming years, AGEM will continue to support the development of a resilient, well-connected network of protected areas and OECMs, reinforcing the Mediterranean's role as a model of sustainable marine management and biodiversity conservation.

## II. The Mediterranean *ad hoc* Group of experts for MPAs (AGEM): Terms of reference

### A) Mission and objectives

14. The primary mission of the *ad hoc* Group of experts is to provide scientific and technical guidance to improve the Mediterranean network of MCPAs and OECMs in terms of coverage, representativity, connectivity and management effectiveness. More concretely, the AGEM ultimate goal is to support the SPA/RAC in the implementation of the Post-2020 Regional Strategy on Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean (MCPA and OECM Strategy), adopted by the Barcelona Convention COP 22 (Antalya, Türkiye, 7-10 December 2021). To this end, the Group will serve as a think tank addressing a wide range of topics of relevance to MPA planning, establishment and management, and OECM identification and reporting in line with the Barcelona Convention MCPA and OECM Strategy.

## B) Tasks

15. The *ad hoc* Group of experts will work to deliver scientific and technical advice regarding the achievement of the “the MCPA and OECM Strategy” of the Barcelona Convention. It should also keep close watch on the Mediterranean network of MPAs with the view of providing assessments and ensuring the timely identification of gaps and hindrances that might impede the proper development of the network. It should deliver sound outputs, clearly drafted, and timely issued, based on the state of the art in terms of knowledge. The main tasks it would undertake are:

- Support the implementation of activities proposed by the “MCPA and OECM Strategy”.
- Guiding the process of the mid-term and final evaluations of the MCPA and OECM Strategy (due in 2026 and 2030, respectively) through its Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.
- Support the SPA/RAC in the elaboration of key documents requested in the framework of the SPA/RAC Programme of Work.
- Provide recommendations and guidance on how to narrow the gap between the North and South and West to East to achieve the 30x30 Target.
- Regularly review the state of Mediterranean MPAs by supporting the elaboration of the four-yearly status report of the Mediterranean network of MPAs, jointly led by SPA/RAC and MedPAN, with the view of evaluating the progress made by the Mediterranean countries towards achieving the 30x30 Target.
- Assess the representativity of the Mediterranean MPA network, in particular through a gap analysis to identify the ecosystems and other components of marine biodiversity that are under-represented and make recommendations to overcome the identified gaps.
- Assess the financial needs and gaps for MPAs and propose innovative funding approaches, including through proper marketing of the services and benefits generated by MPAs.
- Identify potential MPA sites including within the Mediterranean Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs).
- Identify potential OECMs in the Mediterranean and assist the Parties in their reporting.
- Provide scientific advice in response to SPA/RAC requests from its Focal Points and other MPA stakeholders.
- Develop harmonized technical tools including guidelines, standards and indicators as relevant.

The *ad hoc* group of experts should liaise with SPA/BD Focal Points through the SPA/RAC in carrying out the listed tasks, particularly when identifying potential MPA sites or OECMs, so that Contracting Parties are directly involved in such processes.

## C) Membership/Composition

16. To be effective the *ad hoc* Group of experts should include a wide range of expertise and ensure a fair, geographically and gender balanced representation of the Mediterranean sub-regions. It will be made of 21 members, including 16 specialists of the following disciplines (2 members/discipline):

- MPA management
- MPA planning
- Marine Biology/Ecology
- Law and regulation
- Socio-economics (other than fisheries and tourism)
- Fisheries
- Nature-based tourism
- MPA Financing

17. The 16 disciplinary specialist members of the *ad hoc* Group of experts will be designated for a period of four (04) years by the SPA/BD Focal Points. To this end, SPA/RAC will propose a list of at least 32 qualified experts and their CVs (4 experts for each of the 8 disciplines referred to in paragraph 16). The SPA/BD Focal Points may also propose experts and their CVs.

18. Furthermore, each of the 5 following organisations will be invited to designate one representative to be member of the *ad hoc* Group of experts, from scientific bodies or staff:

- The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of GFCM;
- The Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS;
- IUCN/WCPA marine;
- The Scientific Committee of MedPAN;
- WWF.

19. The chair may decide to invite representatives of other organizations or additional experts to speak on specific topics, either on their own initiative or at the request of a Group member.

20. Contribution to the *ad hoc* Group of experts should be on a voluntary basis and the group members will contribute in their personal capacity, and not as representatives of their countries or organizations. They will not receive compensation for their contributions or input to the Group's work.

#### **D) Working languages**

21. The working languages of the *ad hoc* Group of experts will be English and French.

#### **E) Functioning modalities**

22. At each of its first meetings after the appointment of members, the *ad hoc* Group of experts shall elect from among its members a chair and a vice-chair. SPA/RAC will designate one of its officers to provide backstopping services to the AGEM. The backstopping officer will act as the Secretariat of the AGEM and ensure liaison between the *ad hoc* Group of experts and SPA/RAC.

23. Should financial support be available, the *ad hoc* Group of experts will meet physically at least once every year and will exchange electronically on a frequent and regular basis using appropriate means. The work of the *ad hoc* Group of Experts will be mainly through remote meetings and webinars with the support of SPA/RAC.

#### **F) Reporting and record-keeping**

24. The conclusions and recommendations of each meeting of the AGEM will be adopted by the attending members and will be made available on the website of SPA/RAC. Furthermore, the Chair and/or Vice-Chair of AGEM will attend the meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points to report about the AGEM works and to present each of the outputs it issued during the covered period.

## **Annex II**

## Members of the *Ad hoc* Group of Experts for MPAs in the Mediterranean (AGEM) – 2025

### *Membres du Groupe Ad hoc d'Experts pour les AMP en Méditerranée (AGEM) – 2025*

Discipline	Member	Profile	Country
<b>MPA management</b> <i>Gestion des AMP</i>	1) Mr Robert TURK	Senior Nature Conservation Consultant – <i>Consultant senior en conservation de la nature</i>	Slovenia
	2) Ms Sue WELLS	Senior Marine and Coastal Conservation Consultant – <i>Consultante senior en conservation marine et côtière</i>	UK
<b>MPA planning</b> <i>Planification des AMP</i>	3) Ms Souha EL ASMI	Senior Marine environment and policy expert – Founder and Managing Director of Ecoverse Environmental Consulting – <i>Experte senior en environnement marin et en politique, Fondatrice et Directrice générale d'Ecoverse Environmental Consulting</i>	Tunisia
	4) Mr Chedly RAIS	Senior Marine Environmentalist - CEO of OKIANOS – <i>Spécialiste senior de l'environnement marin – PDG d'OKIANOS</i>	Tunisia
<b>Marine Biology/Ecology</b> <i>Biologie/Ecologie marine</i>	5) Mr Leonardo TUNESI	Head of the Unit "Marine biodiversity, habitat and species Protection", ISPRA – <i>Chef de l'unité "Biodiversité marine, protection des habitats et des espèces", ISPRA</i>	Italy
	6) Mr Abdulmaula HAMZA	Assistant Professor and Marine Conservation Consultant - <i>Professeur assistant et consultant en conservation marine</i>	Libya
<b>Law and regulation</b> <i>Droit et réglementation</i>	7) Ms Saba GUELLOUZ	Conservation Manager, WWF North Africa Office – <i>Responsable de la conservation, Bureau WWF Afrique du Nord</i>	Tunisia



	8) Ms Ana STRBENAC	Owner and Director at Stenella consulting, Environmental Protection specialist – <i>Propriétaire et Directrice de Stenella Consulting, spécialiste de la protection de l'environnement</i>	Croatia
<b>Socio-economics</b> <b>Socio-économie</b>	9) Mr Paolo GUIDETTI	Director of the Genoa Marine Center – <i>Directeur du Centre marin de Gênes</i>	Italy
	10) Mr Almokhtar SAID	Head of Marine and Wildlife section, Nature Conservation Department, Ministry of Environment – <i>Responsable de la section Marine et Faune sauvage, Département de la conservation de la nature, Ministère de l'Environnement</i>	Libya
<b>Fisheries</b> <b>Pêche</b>	11) Ms Leila BASTI	Senior Scientist specialized in Marine & Ocean Sciences, Blue Foods Food Security, Blue Economy – <i>Scientifique senior spécialisée en sciences marines et océaniques, sécurité alimentaire des produits de la mer, économie bleue</i>	Tunisia
	12) Mr Marios PAPAGEORGIOU	Director, Head of Fisheries Research - Enalia Physis Environmental Research Centre – <i>Directeur, Responsable de la recherche halieutique – Centre de recherche environnementale Enalia Physis</i>	Cyprus
<b>Nature-based tourism</b> <b>Tourisme de nature</b>	13) Ms Milana TEMPESTA	Founder member, marine biologist and scientific responsible, APS DelTa – <i>Membre fondateur, biologiste marin et responsable scientifique, APS DelTa</i>	Italy
	14) Ms Martina HERVAT	Senior Expert Advisor for Nature Conservation – <i>Conseillère principale en conservation de la nature</i>	Croatia
<b>MPA financing</b> <b>Financement des AMP</b>	15) Mr Giuseppe DI CARLO	Senior ocean science and conservation Consultant – <i>Consultant senior en sciences océaniques et conservation</i>	Italy
	16) Ms Marie ROMANI	Biodiversity policies, partnerships and fundraising Specialist – <i>Spécialiste des politiques de biodiversité, des partenariats et de la collecte de fonds</i>	France

**Representatives of Partner Organisations**  
**Représentants des organisations partenaires**

Organisation	Member	Profile	Country
<b>ACCOBAMS</b>	17) Léa DAVID	SC Task Manager – Responsable du CS	Monaco
<b>GFCM/SAC on Fisheries CGPM/CSC Pêche</b>	18) Mohamed Malouli IDRISI	Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries – Président du Comité Scientifique consultatif des pêches	Italy
<b>MedPAN</b>	19) Joaquim CLAUDET	Scientific Committee Chair – Président du Comité Scientifique	France
	20) Susan Gallon	Scientific Officer – Responsable scientifique	
<b>IUCN/WCPA-marine IUCN/CMAP-marine</b>	21) Ms Yaprak ARDA	Marine Programme Officer – <i>Chargée de programme marin</i>	Spain
	22) Carla Danelutti	Regional Programme Coordinator – <i>Coordonnatrice de programme régional</i>	
<b>WWF Mediterranean WWF Méditerranée</b>	23) Mauro RANDONE	Regional Projects Manager – <i>Responsable des projets régionaux</i>	Italy
	24) Cc: Ms Saba BASKIR	Marine Conservation Officer <i>Chargée de la Conservation marine</i>	

## **Annex III**

SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE (SPA/RAC)  
Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM)  
Fourth meeting  
Teleconference, 21 March 2025

CENTRE D'ACTIVITES REGIONALES POUR LES AIRES SPECIALEMENT PROTEGEES (SPA/RAC)  
Groupe ad hoc d'experts pour les aires marines protégées en Méditerranée (AGEM)  
Quatrième réunion  
Téléconférence, 21 mars 2025

## List of participants *List des participants*

Independent experts / <i>Experts indépendants</i>	
<b>MPA management</b> <i>Gestion des AMP</i>	<b>Mr Robert TURK</b> Senior Nature Conservation Consultant – <i>Consultant senior en conservation de la nature</i> Slovenia/ Slovénie
<b>MPA planning</b> <i>Planification des AMP</i>	<b>Ms Souha EL ASMI</b> Senior Marine environment and policy expert – Founder and Managing Director of Ecoverse Environmental Consulting – <i>Experte senior en environnement marin et en politique, Fondatrice et</i> <i>Directrice générale d'Ecoverse Environmental Consulting</i> Tunisia/Tunisie  <b>Mr Chedly RAIS</b> Senior Marine Environmentalist - CEO of OKIANOS – <i>Spécialiste senior de l'environnement marin – PDG d'OKIANOS</i> Tunisia/Tunisie
<b>Marine biology/ecology</b> <i>Biologie/Écologie marine</i>	<b>Mr Leonardo TUNESI</b> Head of the Unit "Marine biodiversity, habitat and species Protection", ISPRA – <i>Chef de l'unité "Biodiversité marine, protection des habitats et des</i> <i>espèces", ISPRA</i> Italy/Italie  <b>Mr Abdulmaula HAMZA</b> Assistant Professor and Marine Conservation Consultant - <i>Professeur assistant et consultant en conservation marine</i> Libya/Libye

<p><b>Law and regulation</b> <b>Droit et réglementation</b></p>	<p><b>Ms Saba GUELLOUZ</b> Conservation Manager, WWF North Africa Office – <i>Responsable de la conservation, Bureau WWF Afrique du Nord</i> Tunisia/Tunisie</p> <p><b>Ms Ana STREBENAC</b> Owner and Director at Stenella consulting, Environmental Protection specialist – <i>Propriétaire et Directrice de Stenella Consulting, spécialiste de la protection de l'environnement</i> Croatia/Croatie</p>
<p><b>Socio-economics</b> <b>Socio-économie</b></p>	<p><b>Mr Paolo GUIDETTI</b> Director of the Genoa Marine Center – <i>Directeur du Centre marin de Gênes</i> Italy/Italie</p> <p><b>Mr. Almokhtar SAID</b> Head of Marine and Wildlife section, Nature Conservation Department, Ministry of Environment – <i>Responsable de la section Marine et Faune sauvage, Département de la conservation de la nature, Ministère de l'Environnement</i> Libya/Libye</p>
<p><b>Fisheries</b> <b>Pêche</b></p>	<p><b>Ms Leila BASTI</b> Senior Scientist specialized in Marine &amp; Ocean Sciences, Blue Foods Food Security, Blue Economy – <i>Scientifique senior spécialisée en sciences marines et océaniques, sécurité alimentaire des produits de la mer, économie bleue</i> Tunisia/Tunisie</p> <p><b>Mr Marios PAPAGEORGIOU</b> Director, Head of Fisheries Research - Enalia Physis Environmental Research Centre – <i>Directeur, Responsable de la recherche halieutique – Centre de recherche environnementale Enalia Physis</i> Cyprus/Chypre</p>
<p><b>Nature-based tourism</b> <b>Tourisme de nature</b></p>	<p><b>Ms Milena TEMPESTA</b> Founder member, marine biologist and scientific responsible, APS DelTa – <i>Membre fondateur, biologiste marin et responsable scientifique, APS DelTa</i> Italy/Italie</p> <p><b>Ms Martina HERVAT</b> Senior Expert Advisor for Nature Conservation – <i>Conseillère principale en conservation de la nature</i> Croatia/Croatie</p>

<b>MPA Financing</b> <b>Financement des AMP</b>	<b>Mr Giuseppe DI CARLO</b> Senior ocean science and conservation Consultant – <i>Consultant senior en sciences océaniques et conservation</i> Italy/Italie  <b>Ms Marie ROMANI</b> Biodiversity policies, partnerships and fundraising Specialist – <i>Spécialiste des politiques de biodiversité, des partenariats et de la collecte de fonds</i> France/France
<b>Representatives of partner organization scientific bodies</b> <b>Représentants des organes scientifiques d'organisations partenaires</b>	
<b>Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS</b> <b>Comité scientifique de l'ACCOBAMS</b>	<b>Ms Léa David</b> Scientific Committee Task Manager – Responsable du Comité scientifique Monaco
<b>Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of GFCM</b> <b>Comité scientifique consultatif (CSC) de la CGPM</b>	<b>Mr. Mohamed Malouli IDRISI</b> Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries – Président du Comité Scientifique consultatif des pêches Italy/Italie
<b>Scientific Committee of MedPAN</b> <b>Comité scientifique de MedPAN</b>	<b>Mr. Joachim CLAUDET</b> Scientific Committee Chair – Président du Comité Scientifique France  <b>Ms. Susan GALLON</b> Scientific Officer Responsable scientifique France
<b>WCPA-marine of IUCN</b> <b>WCPA-marine de l'IUCN</b>	<b>Ms Yaprak ARDA</b> Marine Programme Officer – <i>Chargée de programme marin</i> Spain/Espagne  <b>Ms Carla DANELUTTI</b> Regional Programme Coordinator – <i>Coordonnatrice de programme régional</i> Spain/Espagne
<b>WWF Mediterranean marine conservation team L'équipe "conservation marine" du WWF Méditerranée</b>	<b>Ms. Mauro RANDONE</b> Regional Projects Manager – <i>Responsable des projets régionaux</i> Italy/Italie  <b>Ms. Saba BASKIR</b> Marine Conservation Officer Chargée de la Conservation marine Italy/Italie

SPA/RAC	
	<b>Ms. Asma KHERIJI</b> SPA Programme Officer - <i>Chargée du programme ASP</i>
	<b>Mr. Dhia GUEZGUEZ</b> Data Management & Computing Officer <i>Responsable de la gestion des données et de l'informatique</i>

## **Annex IV**



SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE (SPA/RAC)  
Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM)  
Fourth meeting  
Teleconference, 21 March 2025

## Meeting Agenda

*Time is indicated in West Africa Time (WAT) / Central European Time (CET) / UTC+1.  
Participants are kindly requested to convert to their respective time zones, if different from WAT/CET.*

Time (UTC+1)	Agenda item	Responsible	Working/Info/Reference document(s)
13.55-14.00	Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants</li> <li>SPA/RAC</li> </ul>	
14.00-14.30	<b>Agenda item 1. Opening of the meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome and opening by the SPA/RAC Director</li> <li>A round table of introduction of AGEM members and SPA/RAC secretariat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPA/RAC</li> <li>Members</li> </ul>	SPA/RAC/AGEM/4/Inf.2 (List of participants)  AGEM composition (2025)
14.30-14.50	<b>Agenda item 2. Organizational matters</b> <p><b>2.1. SPA/RAC and its SPA Programme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brief presentation on SPA/RAC mission, priorities and its SPA Programme</li> </ul> <p><b>2.2. Background, objectives, missions and terms of reference of AGEM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation on AGEM rationale, background, objectives, mission, composition, and functioning modalities</li> <li>Questions and answers</li> </ul> <p><b>2.3. Election of an AGEM Chair and a Vice-chair</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on a proposal by SPA/RAC, a Chair and a Vice-chair will be co-opted by the members</li> </ul> <p><b>2.4. Adoption of the agenda</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPA/RAC</li> <li>SPA/RAC</li> <li>Members</li> <li>SPA/RAC</li> <li>Chair</li> </ul>	SPA/RAC/AGEM/4/1 (Provisional Agenda)  SPA/RAC/AGEM/4/Inf.1 (Provisional List of documents)  AGEM terms of reference (2025)
14.50-16.10	<b>Agenda item 3. Programme of work of AGEM for 2025 and key priorities for 2026-2027</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation of the proposed programme of work by SPA/RAC</li> <li>Review and feed-back from the members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPA/RAC</li> <li>Members</li> </ul>	SPA/RAC/AGEM/4/2 (Programme of work of AGEM for 2025 and key priorities for 2026-2027)

16.10-16.25	<b>Agenda item 4. Follow-up after the meeting and next milestones/meetings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Discussion about next milestones and organisation of the AGEM work</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Members and SPA/RAC</li></ul>	SPA/RAC/AGEM/4/2 (Programme of work of AGEM for 2025 and key priorities for 2026-2027)
16.25-16.30	<b>Agenda item 5. Closure of the meeting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ SPA/RAC</li><li>▪ Chair</li></ul>	

## **Annex V**

# ***Ad hoc* Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM)**

## **Programme of Work for 2025 and key priorities for 2026-2027 biennium**

### **1. Recalling the AGEM mission and objectives**

The primary mission of the *Ad hoc* Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) is to provide scientific and technical guidance to improve the Mediterranean network of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in terms of coverage, representativity, connectivity and management effectiveness.

More concretely, the AGEM ultimate goal is to support the SPA/RAC in the implementation of the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean (MCPA and OECM Strategy), adopted by the Barcelona Convention COP 22 (Antalya, Türkiye, 7-10 December 2021).

To this end, the Group will serve as a think tank addressing a wide range of topics of relevance to MPA planning, establishment and management, and OECM identification and reporting in line with the Barcelona Convention MCPA and OECM Strategy.

### **2. Main tasks of the AGEM until 2030**

The AGEM will work to deliver scientific and technical advice regarding the achievement of the post-2020 MCPA and OECM Strategy of the Barcelona Convention. It should also keep a close watch on the Mediterranean network of MPAs with the view of providing assessments and ensuring the timely identification of gaps and hindrances that might impede the proper development of the network. It should deliver sound outputs, clearly drafted, and timely issued, based on the state of the art in terms of knowledge.

Based on the AGEM Terms of Reference reviewed and approved by the SPA/BD Focal Points via email in January 2025, the main tasks it would undertake are:

- Support the implementation of activities proposed by the “MCPA and OECM Strategy”.
- Guiding the process of the mid-term and final evaluations of the MCPA and OECM Strategy (due in 2026 and 2030, respectively) through its Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.
- Support the SPA/RAC in the elaboration of key documents requested in the framework of the SPA/RAC Programme of Work.
- Provide recommendations and guidance on how to narrow the gap between the North and South and West to East to achieve the 30x30 Target.
- Regularly review the state of Mediterranean MPAs by supporting the elaboration of the four-yearly status report of the Mediterranean network of MPAs, jointly led by SPA/RAC and MedPAN, with the view of evaluating the progress made by the Mediterranean countries towards achieving the 30x30 Target.
- Support through technical and scientific guidance the assessment of the representativity of the Mediterranean MPA network, in particular through a gap analysis to identify the ecosystems and other components of marine biodiversity that are under-represented and make recommendations to overcome the identified gaps.
- Assist in the assessment of the financial needs and gaps for MPAs and in proposing innovative funding approaches, including through proper marketing of the services and benefits generated by MPAs.
- Guide the identification of potential MPA/SPAMI sites including within the Mediterranean Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs).
- Participate in the identification of potential OECMs in the Mediterranean and assist the Parties in their reporting.
- Provide scientific advice in response to SPA/RAC requests from its Focal Points and other MPA stakeholders.
- Develop harmonized technical tools including guidelines, standards and indicators as relevant.

The *ad hoc* group of experts should liaise with the SPA/BD Focal Points through the SPA/RAC in carrying out the listed tasks, particularly when identifying potential MPA sites or OECMs, so that the Contracting Parties are directly involved in such processes.

### 3. AGEM periodic Programmes of Work

Each two years (in line with the periodicity of the biennial Programmes of Work of the Barcelona Convention), AGEM will develop a targeted Programme of Work (PoW) aligned with its overarching objectives and the evolving needs of the MPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean.

These periodic PoWs will outline key priorities, thematic focus areas, and specific actions to support scientific guidance, policy recommendations, and capacity-building efforts. By adapting to emerging challenges and opportunities, AGEM aims to provide strategic expertise and facilitate collaboration among stakeholders to enhance marine conservation and governance in the region.

For the current biennium (2024-2025) and for the newly established AGEM in February 2025, the work programme will cover the remainder of 2025.

In early 2026, AGEM will work on developing its Programme of Work for 2026-2027, outlining specific activities and the timeline for each identified key priority, to ensure their effective and timely implementation.

### 4. Priority topics for AGEM in 2025

In 2025, the AGEM will focus on enhancing and strengthening the strategic framework for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean. Emphasis will be placed on improving the identification and reporting of OECMs, and assessing the conservation impacts of MCPAs with enhanced protection levels. Additionally, AGEM will foster regional collaboration for coordinated research and transboundary conservation efforts, to support the effective implementation of the MCPA and OECM Strategy.

The following proposed deliverables to be guided by the AGEM are subscribed in the SPA/RAC PoW for 2024-2025 adopted by the Barcelona Convention COP23, and aim to strengthen regional cooperation, improve conservation outcomes, and support sustainable governance of Mediterranean marine biodiversity. The first and third deliverables will be carried out by SPA/RAC consultants, and AGEM will ensure guiding the process of their elaboration and their review. The second deliverable would be elaborated internally with the support of a specific AGEM Working Group on Enhanced Protection Levels.

In 2025, the AGEM is expected to guide and/or deliver the following key outputs:

- 1. Mediterranean Guidance on OECMs:** Supporting the development of a regional guidance document to apply OECM criteria and to establish processes for identifying OECM in the Mediterranean, accompanied by a regional webinar to disseminate the guidance, to be submitted to the seventeenth SPA/BD Focal Points Meeting on 20-22 May 2025.
- 2. Impact of MCPAs with Enhanced Protection Levels:** Documentation and communication of the ecological and socio-economic impacts of MCPAs with enhanced protection levels.
- 3. Identification of potential international/transboundary MPAs in open waters:** Support countries in identifying potential international/transboundary Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in open waters.

## 5. Proposed Programme of Work of the AGEM for 2025

Deliverable	Topic	Activity	Rational	Responsible	Timeline of Implementation	Comment
DELIVERABLE 1 (D1)	Mediterranean Guidance on OECMs	Supporting the development of a regional guidance document for identifying and reporting OECMs.	SPA/RAC PoW2024-2025: Activity 2.2.1.a)	AGEM	Early March to late March 2025: guidance document drafting by the consultant.	This action is integrated into the SPA/RAC PoW for 2025.
			<b>MCPA &amp; OECM Strategy Strategic Pillar 3: OECMs</b> <b>Action A.3.1.6 under Output 3.1</b> ( <i>Awareness in Contracting Parties and stakeholders on OECMs enhanced and guidance for the application of OECM criteria provided</i> )  <b>→ A.3.1.6</b> Develop sectoral and other guidance, such as tools and templates, for applying OECM criteria and establishing processes for identifying OECMs	SPA/RAC (with the support of a consultant)  Specific WG on OECM (WG-OECM), as needed  Invited OECM experts	Late March: share the draft document with AGEM for comments.  Early April 2025: discussion through specific AGEM online meeting.  Mid-April 2025: finalisation of the draft document taking into account the AGEM feedback.  18 April 2025: sharing the draft document with the FPs.  20-22 May 2025: discussion of the draft document at the FP meeting.  October - November 2025: Pilot-test the guidance document with an interested country in OECMs, with support of WG-OECM.  Mid-December 2025 (after COP 24, 2-5 December 2025): OECM webinar organization with contribution from AGEM.	A consultant is engaged to develop the Mediterranean guidance on OECM criteria application and their identification.  The AGEM is expected to guide the elaboration of this document to be submitted to the 17 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points on 20-22 May 2025, and in organizing a specific webinar to share the guidance in December 2025 (after the adoption of the guidance).  It is also proposed to pilot-test the guidance with an interested country before the webinar.

Deliverable	Topic	Activity	Rational	Responsible	Timeline of Implementation	Comment
DELIVERABLE 2 (D2)	Impact of MCPAs with Enhanced Protection Levels	Documentation and communication of ecological and socio-economic impacts of MCPAs with enhanced protection levels.	SPA/RAC PoW2024-2025: Activity 2.2.1.a)	AGEM	June - September 2025: elaboration of a first draft of the Impact of MCPAs with enhanced protection levels by the WG-EP.	It is proposed that the WG-EP lead the elaboration of the document.
			<b>MCPA &amp; OEEM Strategy Strategic Pillar 2: MCPA Network Expansion</b> <b>Action A.3.1.6 under Output 2.4</b> ( <i>The number and coverage of MCPAs with enhanced protection levels is increased</i> )  <b>→ A.2.4.4</b> Provide tools for monitoring, documenting and communicating impacts of MCPAs with enhanced protection levels	Specific WG on MCPA with enhanced protection levels (WG-EP)  Invited relevant experts  Specific organisations could be invited to collaborate, such as The MedFund, BlueSeeds or MedSea Alliance	October - November 2025: first draft shared with AGEM for comments and feedback.  December 2025: finalization of the document.	This document could be shared with the AGEM for comments and then validated by email.  Specific organisations such as MedPAN can support the preparation of the document since they have elaborated some tools on MCPA with enhanced and strict protection.

Deliverable	Topic	Activity	Rational	Responsible	Timeline of Implementation	Comment
DELIVERABLE 4 (D3)	<b>Identification of potential international/Transboundary MPAs in open waters</b>	Study on facilitating collaboration among neighboring countries to coordinate joint research and identify potential MPAs in open waters.	SPA/RAC PoW2024-2025: Activity 2.2.2.e)	AGEM	June - August 2025: first draft prepared by SPA/RAC consultant.	The document is to be elaborated by SPA/RAC consultant (French Voluntary Contribution financial support).
			<b>MCPA &amp; OECM Strategy Strategic Pillar 2: MCPA Network Expansion</b> <b>Action A.2.1.3 under Output 2.1</b> ( <i>Areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services are identified</i> )  → A.2.1.3 Collaborate with neighbouring countries to promote joint co-ordinated research in ABNJs and to identify potential MCPAs based on harmonized monitoring protocols	SPA/RAC (with the support of a consultant)  Invited experts on ABNJs/international laws and regulation.	September - October 2025: draft circulated to AGEM for feedback.  November 2025: specific online meeting to discuss about the draft.  December 2025: finalisation of the document.	The AGEM will accompany the expert with guidance.  Document should be discussed through specific online meeting.



## 6. Simplified timetable of the AGEM PoW for 2025

N°	Topic	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
-	Kick-off of the AGEM: introduction and PoW2025	<b>W2: First AGEM Meeting (PoW)</b>	<b>W3:</b> finalization and submission to FP								
D1	Mediterranean Guidance for OECMs	<b>W1-W4:</b> Draft of the document	<b>W1: Second AGEM Meeting (OECM)</b>  <b>W3:</b> Finalisation and submission to FP								<b>W2: OECM webinar</b>
D2	Impact of MCPAs with Enhanced Protection Levels				<b>W1:</b> Constitution of <b>WG-EP</b> and Start of work			<b>W4:</b> First draft of the doc	<b>W1:</b> Circulated to AGEM for feedback	<b>W1:</b> Integration of comments  <b>W3: Third AGEM Meeting (MPAs in open waters + Enhanced Protection)</b>	<b>W3:</b> Finalisation of the doc
D3	Identification of potential MPAs in open waters				<b>W3:</b> Expert recruited			<b>W 4:</b> First draft of the doc	<b>W1:</b> Circulated to AGEM for feedback	<b>W3: Third AGEM Meeting (MPAs in open waters + Enhanced Protection)</b>	<b>W3:</b> Finalisation of the doc

## 7. Key priorities for AGEM during the biennium 2026-2027

Based on the draft 2026-2027 SPA/RAC Programme of Work, the AGEM Terms of Reference, and in line with the MCPA and OECM Strategy, the following key topics have been identified as priority areas for AGEM to focus on during 2026-2027 biennium, ensuring alignment with regional conservation objectives and ongoing initiatives.

### 7.1. The MCPA and OECM Strategy mid-term evaluation

#### *Rationale:*

- ➔ Decision IG.26/5 “Specially Protected Areas (SPAs), Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) and Ecosystem Restoration” of the Barcelona Convention COP23 (5-8 December 2023, Slovenia).
- ➔ The MCPA and OECM Strategy: Chapter 3 (Strategy implementation), Section 3.3: Monitoring and implementation; and the Strategy’s Evaluation and Monitoring Framework.
- ➔ Draft 2026-2027 SPA/RAC Programme of Work: Activity 5.1.2.a) Mid-term (2026) evaluation of the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean, through its Evaluation and Monitoring Framework, with conclusions and recommendations for the Strategy implementation by 2030 elaborated.

#### *Objective:*

- ➔ Guide and contribute to the Mid-term Evaluation of the Barcelona Convention Post-2020 Regional Strategy on MCPA and OECM in the Mediterranean through its Evaluation and Monitoring Framework:
  - Develop guiding principles for the MCPA and OECM Strategy evaluation;
  - Comment the Terms of Reference for the Strategy assessment consultation;
  - Review and contribute to the methodology and timeline for assessing the implementation of the MCPA and OECM Strategy;
  - Organize and participate in online meetings dedicated to the Strategy evaluation process;
  - Review and discuss the Strategy evaluation drafts during its development process;
  - Propose recommendations for the effective implementation of the MCPA and OECM Strategy for the remaining period until 2030.

#### *Note:*

- ➔ The Strategy assessment should be submitted to the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points in mid-2027. The preparation of this deliverable should start in early 2026 and finish not later than March 2027.

### 7.2. MPA Status report

#### *Rationale:*

- ➔ SPA/RAC draft PoW 2026-2027: Activity 2.2.1.i) Status report on the Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean elaborated and disseminated

#### *Objective:*

- ➔ Support the elaboration of the four-yearly status report of the Mediterranean network of MPAs, jointly led by SPA/RAC and MedPAN, with the view of evaluating the progress made by the Mediterranean countries towards achieving the 30x30 Target, contributing to the regular review of the state of Mediterranean MPAs:
  - Contribute to/review specific sections of the report;
  - Review and discuss the MPA Status draft reports during its development process;
  - Propose recommendations to enhance MPA coverage and the effective management of MPAs in the Mediterranean.

#### *Note:*

- ➔ The MPA Status report is jointly developed by SPA/RAC and MedPAN and will be presented during the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Mediterranean MPA Forum to be organized during 2027.

### 7.3. OECMs identification, recognition and reporting

#### *Rationale:*

- ➔ The MCPA and OECM Strategy: Strategic Pillar 3 (OECMs), Output 3.1: Awareness in Contracting Parties and stakeholders on OECMs enhanced and guidance for the application of OECM criteria provided & Output 3.2: OECMs identified, recognized and reported to regional and global databases by Contracting Parties and regional organizations

#### *Objective:*

- ➔ Promote the OECM recognition and identification, based on the “Guidance for Mediterranean OECMs: Identification and criteria application” that will be developed in 2025 with the support of AGEM and adopted by the Barcelona Convention COP 24 in December 2025:
  - Continue advancing the reflection and efforts on OECMs. This process will be guided by the framework and guidance under-preparation by SPA/RAC, to be submitted to the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points, with a focus on practical application and knowledge sharing among Mediterranean stakeholders. SPA/RAC and partner organization in the Mediterranean to lead the work on OECM in close consultation with the Contracting Parties.

#### *Note:*

- ➔ The OECM guidance will be developed in 2025, and it is proposed to put the focus on OECMs in 2026 and continue the efforts in 2027.

### 7.4. MCPA coverage and representativity:

#### *Rationale:*

- ➔ The MCPA and OECM Strategy: Strategic Pillar 2 (MCPA Network expansion): Output 2.1: Areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services are identified, Output 2.2: Distribution of MCPA systems across the Mediterranean Sea is balanced & Output 2.3: MCPA coverage in areas beyond national jurisdiction is increased

#### *Objective:*

- ➔ Narrow the gap and enhance the MCPA coverage in the Mediterranean and support through technical and scientific guidance the assessment of the representativity of the Mediterranean MPA network :
  - Identify the challenges and obstacles hindering the declaration of new MPAs;
  - Identify the marine biodiversity that are under-represented;
  - Identify funding gaps and exploring new funding mechanisms for MPAs.
  - Provide tailored guidance and specific recommendations on how to narrow the gap, in particular between the North and South and West to East, to achieve the 30x30 Target.

#### *Note:*

- ➔ This work could be based on the MCPA and OECM Strategy assessment and on the MPA Status report that will be developed in 2026.