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

Status of implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Roadmap

Note:

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Note by the Secretariat

1. This present report outlines the efforts undertaken by the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) from April 2023 to April 2025 to support the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. In line with the Medium-Term Strategy (2022–2027), SPA/RAC worked to align existing monitoring activities under the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol) and the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO) with the updated requirements of IMAP. This includes addressing key recommendations from the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR) related to biodiversity (EO1) and non-indigenous species (EO2).
2. The report also outlines progress made under Decision IG.26/3 of COP 23 regarding the revision of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) policy and the regional IMAP. Specifically, it presents the proposed updates to the EcAp Roadmap and the preliminary revisions to the IMAP structure, both of which were reviewed during the 11th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group.
3. The meeting is expected to review the progress made and provide guidance on the way forward, while exploring ways to enhance synergies among relevant outputs and outcomes at both national and regional levels.
4. The appendices to the present document were discussed with the Biodiversity Online Working Group and were reviewed and endorsed by the COMON Biodiversity and Fisheries meeting held in Athens, Greece, 7 – 8 April 2025. It agreed on their submission to 17th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points (Istanbul, Türkiye, 20-22 May 2025).
5. The meeting is expected to review and to agree on the submission to the Meeting of EcAp Coordination Group and the Meeting of MAP Focal Points, of the following appendices:
 - (i) Appendix A “Common Indicators of the EcAp Ecological Objective 4 on Marine Food Webs under the Barcelona Convention”;
 - (ii) Appendix B “Draft EcAp Ecological Objective 6 on sea-floor integrity under the Barcelona Convention”,
 - (iii) Appendix C “Proposal of Indicators based on phytoplankton and zooplankton for relevant IMAP biodiversity indicators.”, and
 - (iv) Appendix D “Draft Assessment methodologies, Assessment criteria and thresholds for biodiversity common indicators CI1 and CI2”.

I. Introduction

1. In 2008, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, through their COP 15 Decision IG.17/6, committed to progressively applying the Ecosystem Approach for managing human activities impacting the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment. This approach aims to promote sustainable development and achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) for the Mediterranean Sea and its coasts.

2. A key aspect of implementing the Ecosystem Approach involves monitoring and assessing the status of the marine and coastal environment. To establish a coherent regional framework, the Contracting Parties adopted the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) through COP 19 Decision IG.22/7 in 2016.

3. In line with:

- Decision IG.17/6: “Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to the management of human activities that may affect the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment”.
- Decision IG.20/4: “Implementing MAP ecosystem approach roadmap (Mediterranean Ecological and Operational Objectives, Indicators and Timetable for Implementing the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap”.
- Decision IG.21/3: “Ecosystem Approach including adopting definitions of Good Environmental Status (GES) and Targets”.
- Decision IG.23/6: “2017 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR)”.
- Decision IG.24/4: “Assessment Studies” (Annex V: Roadmap and Needs Assessment for the 2023 MED QSR)
- Decision IG.25/3: “Governance” (Annex I: Governance Mechanism for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in the Mediterranean).
- Decision IG.25/10: “MAP Data Policy”.
- Decision IG.26/3: “The 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR) and a Renewed Ecosystem Approach Policy in the Mediterranean”.

the Contracting Parties have updated or developed their national monitoring programmes based on the IMAP Common Indicators, grouped into three clusters: Biodiversity and Non-Indigenous Species (NIS), Pollution and Marine Litter, and Coast and Hydrography. IMAP's 23 Common Indicators primarily focus on state and impact indicators. Additionally, a significant element of this process involves defining monitoring and assessment scales and identifying key assessment elements such as criteria, thresholds, and baseline values for each IMAP cluster.

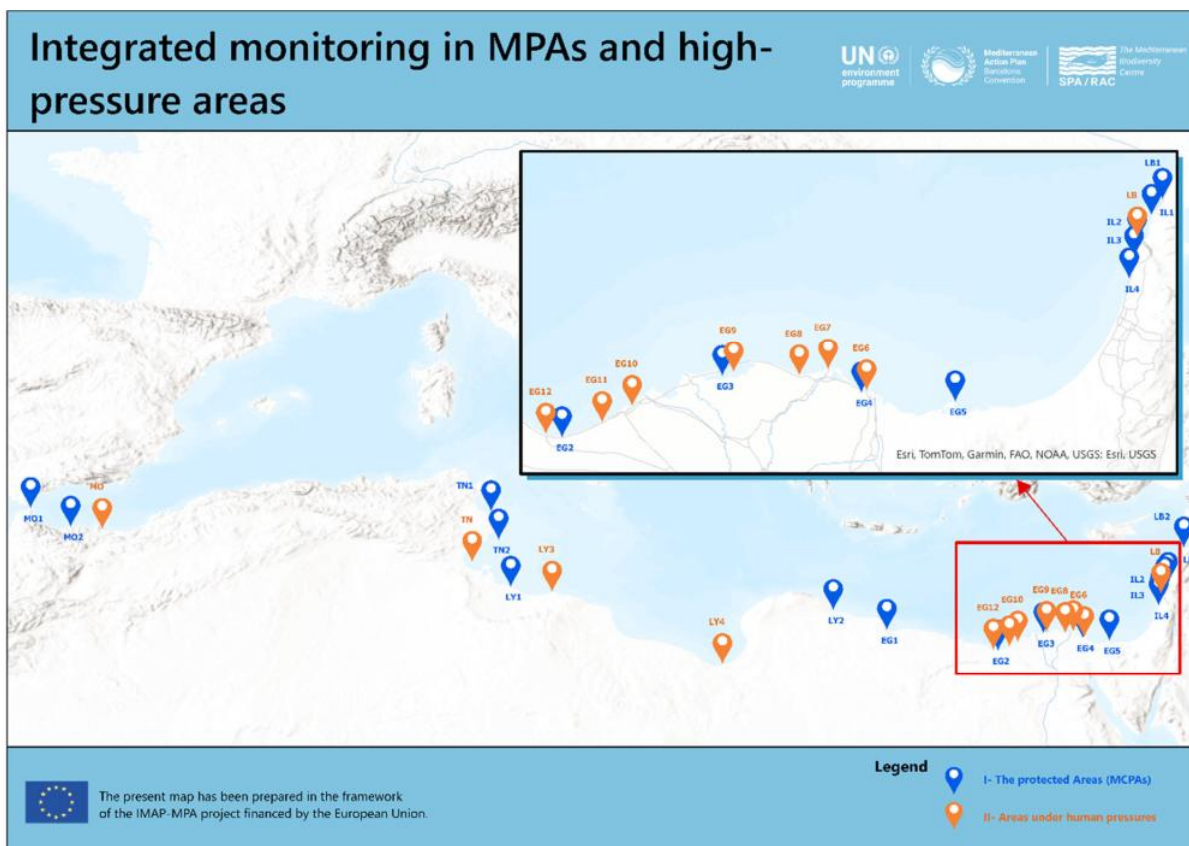
4. Building on national IMAP-based monitoring experience and the findings of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR), the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, through Decision IG.26/3 adopted at COP 23, agreed to update the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) and the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP). This update aims to enhance IMAP implementation, strengthen national monitoring and assessment capacities, ensure quality-assured data, and improve the overall reliability of assessments.

5. This present report outlines the efforts undertaken by the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) from April 2023 to April 2025 to support the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. In line with the Medium-Term Strategy (2022–2027), SPA/RAC worked to align existing monitoring activities under the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol) and the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO) with the updated requirements of IMAP. This includes addressing key recommendations from the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR) related to biodiversity (EO1) and non-indigenous species (EO2).

6. The appendices to the present document were discussed with the Biodiversity Online Working Group and were reviewed and endorsed by the COMON Biodiversity and Fisheries meeting held in April 2025.
7. The meeting is expected to review the progress made and provide guidance on the way forward, while exploring ways to enhance synergies among relevant outputs and outcomes at both national and regional levels.
8. The appendices to the present document were discussed with the Biodiversity Online Working Group and were reviewed and endorsed by the COMON Biodiversity and Fisheries meeting held in Athens, Greece, 7 – 8 April 2025. It agreed on their submission to 17th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points (Istanbul, Türkiye, 20-22 May 2025).
9. The meeting is expected to review and to agree on their submission to the Meeting of EcAp Coordination Group and the Meeting of MAP Focal Points

II. Overview of the national activities on IMAP implementation related to biodiversity and non-indigenous species

10. Progress has been made by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention on the national implementation of IMAP, with the support of SPA/RAC. Within the framework of the EU-funded projects IMAP-MPA and EcAp-MED III projects, SPA/RAC has supported Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia to elaborate an integrated monitoring plan for biodiversity implemented in pilot sites (MPAs and in high pressure areas, Figure 1). The projects successfully supported 6 beneficiary countries in the implementation of monitoring programmes in selected sites, in line with previously approved IMAP National Strategies, applying common and harmonized monitoring methodologies for the implementation of the IMAP, providing technical support via Regional Experts, ensuring regional cooperation and best practices exchange and enhancing national and local capacities via training on monitoring design, methodology implementation, analyses and reporting via the IMAP InfoSystem. This allowed beneficiary countries to participate to the preparation of the MED QSR 2023 and to ensure sustainability of actions implemented, in line with EcAp/IMAP roadmap.
11. As part of the EcAp-MED III project, two national workshops were held in Libya and Lebanon to review IMAP implementation results and lessons learned. The first, organized by SPA/RAC and the Libyan Ministry of Environment, took place in Tripoli on 25 December 2023. It focused on the outcomes of the IMAP-MPA and EcAp-MED III projects and future steps for IMAP implementation in Libya. The second workshop was held on 18–19 December 2023 in Lebanon, co-organized by SPA/RAC, CNRS-Lebanon, the Lebanese Ministry of Environment, NCMS/CNRS-Lebanon, and AUF. It gathered national stakeholders to discuss progress and challenges in implementing IMAP in Lebanon.
12. Following the closure of the IMAP-MPA project in August 2023 and the EcAp-MED III project in February 2024, two new EU-funded projects -**SEMPA** and **EcAp Med Plus** - have been launched as part of the UNEP/MAP portfolio of EU-funded projects, which also includes the follow-up phases of the IMAP-MPA and EcAp-MED III projects. These new projects will be implemented until mid-2027, with complementary objectives and activities, further strengthening the implementation of Good Environmental Status (GES) based on the findings of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report.
13. **The EcAp MED PLUS Project**, builds on the achievements of EcAp MED III Project. Its overall objective is to support the institutional and technical capacities of the Southern Mediterranean Contracting Parties (SMCPs) (*i.e.*, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia) in upgrading and implementing the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) policy and the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) in the Mediterranean, thus ensuring a sound progression towards achieving Good Environmental Status (GES) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



IMAP-MPA Project: Integrated monitoring in MPAs and high-pressure areas

Egypt

I- The protected Areas:

- EG1 - Salloum MPA
- EG2 - Omayed MCPA
- EG3 - Burullus MCPA
- EG4 - Ashtoum El-Gamil MCPA
- EG5 - Bardawil coastal depression protected area

II- Areas under human pressures

- EG6 - Manzala Lake
- EG7 - Ras El-Bar
- EG8 - Gamasa
- EG9 - Burullus Lake
- EG10 - Alexandria Gov
- EG11 - North Coast
- EG12 - Al Alamein

Israel

I- The protected Areas:

- IL1 - Yam Rosh Hanikra MPA
- IL2 - Shikmona MPA
- IL3 - Dor-Habonim MPA
- IL4 - Gdor MPA

Lebanon

I- The protected Areas:

- LB1 - Tyre Coast Nature Reserve
- LB2 - Palms Islands Nature Reserve

II- Areas under human pressures

- LB - Beirut area

Libya

I- The protected Areas:

- LY1 - Farwa Lagoon
- LY2 - Al-Gazalla MPA

II- Areas under human pressures

- LY3 - Tripoli coast
- LY4 - Area the Gulf of Sirte

Morocco

I- The protected Areas:

- MO1 - Jbel Moussa MCPA – Morocco
- MO2 - Al Hoceima National Parc MCPA

II- Areas under human pressures

- MO - Nador (Marchika) lagoon

Tunisia

I- The protected Areas:

- TN1 - Kuriat Future MCPA
- TN2 - Kerkennah Northern Island MCPA – Tunisia

II- Areas under human pressures

- TN - Gulf of Gabes

Figure 1. Integrated Biodiversity Monitoring Plan Implemented at Pilot Sites (Marine Protected Areas and High-Pressure Areas) under the IMPA-MPA Project

14. The Project will support the Southern Mediterranean Contacting Parties to address the following specific objectives:

- Support the next phase of implementation of the EcAp policy and roadmap, in particular by supporting SMCPs in updating IMAP at regional and national levels, as well as updating IMAP Info System;
- Further strengthen and progressively improve the capacities of SMCPs on effective IMAP implementation;
- Complementarily to the above-mentioned specific objectives, support SMCPs in reviewing/developing/upgrading the national Programmes of Measures (PoMs) and National Action Plans (NAPs);
- Support SMCPs in further developing cooperation capacities and opportunities at regional and sub-regional level in achieving GES and SDGs in the Mediterranean.

15. The operationalization of the EcAp MED PLUS project has been initiated, including the preparation and signature of the SSFA with the Coordinating Unit and the official contact with the beneficiary countries. SPA/RAC focused on identifying suitable modalities for financial management with the three countries for which it is responsible, namely Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria. Bilateral discussions were held with these three countries to designate the Institutional Partners: Algeria (Observatoire National de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable), Libya (Ministry of Environment), and Tunisia (Agence de Protection et d'Aménagement du Littoral). The MoA are currently being finalized.

16. **The SEMPA Project**, funded by the European Union, contributes to the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES) in the Mediterranean Sea and Coast in seven (7) countries that are contracting parties to the Barcelona Convention, namely Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.

17. The SEMPA project is executed by the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit, and the SPA/RAC. SEMPA is part of the UNEP/MAP portfolio of EU-funded projects, which also includes the follow-up phases of the EcAp MED III and Marine Litter MED II projects. These three projects will be carried out concurrently until mid-2027, pursuing complementary objectives and activities that are further boosting the implementation of GES based on the findings of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report.

18. With the overall objective of contributing to the achievement of GES in the Mediterranean Sea and coast, the specific objectives of the SEMPA Project are:

- to support the implementation of the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region
- to continue support on the implementation of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) with a particular focus on biodiversity and Non-indigenous Species (NIS); hydrography and coast; and interlinkages with climate change, expanding the scope of the support to SEIS implementation and its related indicators to biodiversity and climate change.
- to induce self-sustained improvements in gender mainstreaming and women empowerment, especially in the designation and management processes of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs)

19. Building on the IMAP-MPA project's achievements, the SEMPA project is expected to contribute to the implementation of the UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2027 and the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP).

20. SSFAs have been drafted and shared with all Beneficiary Countries since January 2024. The CU, SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC have held several meetings with the beneficiary countries to discuss

and select common indicators related to biodiversity. Given the difficulties in transferring funds to the Ministry of Environment of Libya, the Coordinating Unit and SPA/RAC agreed that SPA/RAC will manage the activities in Libya in close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment. A draft SSFA has been prepared by SPA/RAC and shared, awaiting comments and signature from the Libyan authorities (Ministry of Environment).

21. To ensure effective coordination and harmonized implementation of the two complementary projects, SEMPA and EcAp MED PLUS, SPA/RAC held coordination and activity planning meetings with national partners in Tunisia in July 2024, Libya in September 2024 and Algeria in January 2025. These meetings aimed to provide a detailed presentation of both projects, highlight their complementarity, discuss implementation modalities, particularly regarding IMAP, and strengthen coordination among the various stakeholders.

22. Within the framework of SPA/RAC's Programmes of Work (from April 2023 to April 2025), SPA/RAC has assisted Bosnia and Herzegovina and Türkiye in implementing their national IMAPs for biodiversity. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, seabird monitoring has been implemented, while in the Foça SEPA in Türkiye, monitoring of *Posidonia oceanica* meadows has been conducted. Data standards (Ds) and data dictionaries (DD) have been included by both countries in the IMAP Info System.

23. SPA/RAC has continued its support to Montenegro for the implementation of its national IMAP for Biodiversity and NIS since 2022. Within the framework of the 2024–2025 Programme of Work, a new MoA was signed with the Institute of Marine Biology in Montenegro. A comprehensive monitoring plan was developed for field surveys under Ecological Objective EO1, specifically for Common Indicators CI1 and CI2. The monitoring focuses on two types of habitats: *Posidonia oceanica* meadows at MPA Katič (pristine site) and Herceg Novi (high-pressure site); and Coralligenous communities at MPA Stari Ulcinj, Rt Rep (pristine site), and MPA Dražin Vrt (high-pressure site). The selected monitoring sites are aligned with the national monitoring programme. Fieldwork has already begun, and the activity is expected to be finalized by December 2025.

III. Overview of the regional activities on IMAP implementation related to biodiversity and on-indigenous species

24. Decision IG.24/4 on the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap and Needs Assessment defines the vision for the successful delivery of the 2023 MED QSR and outlines key IMAP-related processes, milestones, and outputs to be undertaken, along with their timelines. As a contribution to the biodiversity (EO1) and non-indigenous species (EO2) chapters of the 2023 MED QSR, six thematic assessment reports—covering benthic habitats, cetaceans, the Mediterranean monk seal, seabirds, marine turtles, and non-indigenous species—were developed by the SPA/RAC. These reports were discussed during the CORMON Meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries (Athens, Greece, 9–10 March 2023), the Integrated CORMON Meeting (Athens, Greece, 27–28 June 2023), and the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group Meeting (Istanbul, 11 September 2023).

25. CoP 23 held on 5-8 December 2023, in Portoroz, Slovenia took note of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MED QSR) (UNEP/MED IG.26/Inf.10) and endorsed its provisional Executive Summary (Decision IG.26/3). In addition, Summary for Policy Makers (SfPM) was prepared as one of the communication products of the 2023 MED QSR following the request of The CoP 23. The full version of the Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR) was edited and published in December 2024.

26. The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, through Decision IG.26/3 of COP 23, called for a revision of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) policy for the Mediterranean. This revision takes into account, among other elements, the outcomes of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR), the findings of the independent evaluation of the EcAp Roadmap implementation, the work of the Secretariat, and the conclusions of the CORMONs and the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group. It also considers recent global and regional developments, including

the expected MSFD evaluation and revision. The same decision calls for revising IMAP, with a focus on enhancing its implementation and strengthening national monitoring and assessment capacities, to ensure the delivery of quality-assured data and reliable assessments. A first proposal for updating the EcAp Roadmap (UNEP/MED WG. 608/Inf.24), along with elements for revising the IMAP outline (UNEP/MEDWG. 608/Inf.25), were reviewed during the 11th meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (UNEP/MED WG. 608/Inf.23).

27. Based on Annex I of Decision IG.25/03, Terms of Reference for the CORMONs, COR ESA, and Online Working Groups, as well as a Flow of Interaction between the Ecosystem Approach and MAP Governing Bodies, were prepared with the aim to: (a) update the ToRs for the Correspondence Groups (CORMONs and COR ESA) and Online Working Groups (OWGs) in line with Decision IG.25/03 adopted at COP 22; and (b) clarify the workflow between the Correspondence Groups and the MAP decision-making bodies, as well as define the roles and interactions between MAP Components and the Coordinating Unit in the development of EcAp-related outputs (UNEP/MED WG. 608/Inf.26). The ToR were also presented and reviewed during the 11th meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group.

28. As part of its 2025–2026 Programme of Work, SPA/RAC organized two meetings of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) for Biodiversity and Fisheries. The first meeting, held online on 6–7 June 2024 (UNEP/MEDWG. 608/Inf.22). The second meeting took place on 7–8 April 2025 in Athens, Greece (UNEP/MEDWG. 608/Inf.27). The two CORMON meetings focused on reviewing the development of Ecological Objectives EO4 (marine food webs) and EO6 (sea-floor integrity), discussing monitoring and assessment elements for Common Indicators CI1 and CI2 (benthic and pelagic habitats), providing a progress update on CI24, preparing the IMAP revision for Biodiversity (EO1) and Non-Indigenous Species (EO2), presenting best practices related to GES determination, climate change impacts, food webs, and sea-floor integrity, and updating factsheets, data dictionaries, and standards for indicators related to EO1 (biodiversity), EO2 (NIS), and EO3 (fisheries).

29. The current IMAP covers the ecological objectives related to biodiversity (EO1), non-indigenous species (EO2), eutrophication (EO5), hydrography (EO7), coast (EO8), contaminants (EO9), and marine litter (EO10). Ecological objectives for marine food webs (EO4) and sea-floor integrity (EO6) are not yet included in the IMAP. They were discussed in the early stages of the EcAp implementation process, with initial proposals made in 2013 for a description of GES, associated indicators and related targets (UNEP/MAP, 2013). However, it was agreed at that time that EO4 and EO6 needed further development, considering the lack of data and the knowledge gaps on these two topics in the Mediterranean Sea region.

30. Regarding the Ecological Objective 4 (EO4) on marine food webs, and as a first step towards developing EO4 on marine food webs, SPA/RAC has initiated (2022-2023) a desk review study to inventory data sources, best practices, and methodologies for monitoring and assessing marine food webs in the Mediterranean (UNEP/MEDWG. 608/Inf.19). At the CORMON Biodiversity and Fisheries Meeting, held on June 6–7, 2024, it was recommended that a biodiversity working group on marine food webs be established. This group has focus on advancing the development of IMAP EO4 on marine food webs, with support from the Italian Working Group under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The main outcomes of the Working Group's recommendations, outlines the most relevant approach to developing IMAP common indicators and proposed common indicators for EO 4 on Marine Food (Appendix A) were submitted to the CORMON Meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries (Athens, Greece, 7–8 April 2025) for review and consideration. The CORMON meeting endorsed the proposed indicators

31. Within SPA/RAC Programme of work (2022-2023) and with the support of the ABIOMMED EU-funded project and the MASE funds, a first proposal for the further development of EO6 regarding sea-floor integrity was drafted. This proposal (Appendix B) includes proposals of GES descriptions, related targets and indicators for the EO6 (Sea-floor integrity). It includes also proposals regarding the broad benthic habitats, the sources of pressures to be considered in the determination of the GES

regarding this EO and the linkages with the other EOs. The document was presented to the Biodiversity Online Working Group (OWG) on benthic habitats (9 December 2022), to the meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on monitoring (CORMON) on biodiversity and fisheries (Athens, 9-10 March 2023), to the SPA/BD Focal Points meeting (Malta, 22-24 May 2023), to the meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on monitoring (CORMON) on biodiversity and fisheries (Videoconference, 6-7 June 2024) to the CORMON Meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries (Athens, Greece, 7–8 April 2025) for review and consideration. The CORMON meeting endorsed the proposed Ecological Objective 6 (Sea-floor Integrity), along with its set of common indicators

32. Following the adoption of Decision IG.25/13 at the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Barcelona Convention, SPA/RAC established a multidisciplinary group of experts appointed by the Contracting Parties. Their mission was to define parameters for using phytoplankton and zooplankton as biodiversity indicators within the IMAP framework and to develop a reference list of pelagic habitats in the Mediterranean for national monitoring. The multidisciplinary group of experts convened online on April 5, 2023, and formulated conclusions and recommendations that were later adopted under Decision IG.26/5 at COP 23 (Portorož, Slovenia, December 5–8, 2023) and requested SPA/RAC to continue the work of the multidisciplinary group of experts to advance the development of the indicators using phytoplankton and zooplankton for relevant IMAP biodiversity indicators.

33. During the CORMON Biodiversity and Fisheries Meeting (June 6–7, 2024), the Biodiversity Online Working Group (OWG) on pelagic habitats was established to discuss and agree on the approach, methods, and timeline for developing indicators based on phytoplankton and zooplankton for relevant IMAP biodiversity indicators. During the last Biodiversity and Fisheries CORMON Meeting (April 2025), the Working Group's key recommendations and outlines the most appropriate approach for advancing these indicators (Appendix C) was prepared with the support of the OWG on pelagic habitats was agreed on the proposed indicators.

34. Decision IG.26/3 on key findings of the 2017 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (the MED QSR Decision) recommends a list of directions towards the 2023 MED QSR including the definition of the reference state of habitats and species, threshold values and assessment criteria. To that effect, since with the Programmes of Work 2020-2021, SPA/RAC has undertaken actions aimed at developing and standardizing monitoring and assessment methods related to IMAP Biodiversity Cluster, including the development of monitoring and assessment scales, assessment criteria, thresholds and baseline values for the IMAP common indicators related to biodiversity (EO1) and NIS (EO2).

35. Within its Programme of Work for 2024–2025, SPA/RAC has developed a proposal for monitoring and assessment elements related to the two IMAP Common Indicators for benthic habitats (CI1 and CI2), and their application to three habitat types: *Posidonia oceanica* meadows, coralligenous assemblages, and maërl beds. The objective is to incorporate these elements into the next Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MedQSR), scheduled for 2031. The proposal (Appendix D) was developed with the support of the Biodiversity Online Working Group (OWG) on benthic habitats and was submitted to the CORMON Meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries (Athens, Greece, 7–8 April 2025) for review and consideration. The CORMON meeting endorsed the proposed monitoring and assessment elements.

36. As one of the most significant threats to biodiversity in the Mediterranean Sea, climate change requires further clarification within the IMAP. Its impact should be integrated into existing indicators and methodologies, particularly in the establishment of baseline and threshold values. To this end, the SPA/RAC, within the ABIOMMED project, undertook a review of the elements associated with the assessment of Good Environmental Status (GES), including climate change, in the Mediterranean region. The “State of the art regarding the available information on GES and the effects of climate change and other cumulative pressures in its determination in the Mediterranean” (UNEP/MED WG. 608/Inf.20) report explores the state of available information on GES and the impacts of climate

change, focusing on impediments to GES determination, particularly the effects of climate change on assessment processes within the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

37. The CORMON Biodiversity and Fisheries Meeting (June 6–7, 2024), expressed its appreciation for the contribution of the Biodiversity Online Working Groups (OWGs) to the progress of the EcAp/IMAP process and recommended the continuation of their work for further progress. It was also requested to Mediterranean countries that have not yet appointed members to the Biodiversity Online Working Group (OWG) to do so promptly to enhance the group's expertise and regional representation

38. Regarding the EO3, GFCM Secretariat during CORMON Biodiversity and Fisheries Meeting (April 7–8, 2025), informed the meeting of the GFCM's contribution to the monitoring and assessment of the status of fisheries in the Mediterranean, and the way forward for the Common Indicators CI7, CI8, and CI9 (UNEP/MED WG.606/9).

39. The project "Fisheries and Ecosystem-Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean" (FishEBM MED), funded by the GEF for the period 2023–2026, is also contributing to several relevant activities related to the implementation of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) at both regional and national levels. This contribution is made through Output 3.2, "Monitoring of good environmental status of Mediterranean ecosystems and biodiversity ensured, with established link to pollution impacts and sustainable use of marine ecosystem services", and Output 3.3, "Measures identified to cope with the negative effects of non-indigenous species on biodiversity as well as those of other potential stressors." Further information regarding the progress and ongoing activities of FishEBM MED is presented in Document (UNEP/MED WG. 608/Inf.6).

40. Update on the progress made related to Candidate Indicator 24: Trends in the amount of litter ingested by or entangling marine organisms focusing on selected mammals, marine birds, and marine turtle (UNEP/MED WG.606/7) and was also reviewed agreed on its submission to the Marine Litter CORMON Meeting (May 2025) and the EcAp Coordination Group Meeting (Athens, Greece, 15 September 2025). Further information regarding the progress related to Candidate Indicator 24 is presented in Document (UNEP/MED WG. 608/Inf.21).

41. In order to establish a directory of experts and national institutions that can contribute to the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach and the IMAP program, the SPA/RAC has prepared and sent a questionnaire to the Contracting Countries to collect the necessary information.

42. The appendices to the present document were discussed with the informal Online Working Group and were submitted to the to the CORMON Meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries (Athens, Greece, 7–8 April 2025). It agreed on their submission to 17th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points (Istanbul, Türkiye, 20-22 May 2025) for review, with a view to their submission to the EcAp Coordination Group Meeting and the Meeting of MAP Focal Points.

Appendixes

Appendix A : Proposal of Common Indicators of the EcAp Ecological Objective 4 on Marine Food Webs under the Barcelona Convention.

Appendix B: Draft EcAp Ecological Objective 6 on sea-floor integrity under the Barcelona Convention.

Appendix C: Proposal of Indicators based on phytoplankton and zooplankton for relevant IMAP biodiversity indicators.

Appendix D: Draft Assessment methodologies, Assessment criteria and thresholds for biodiversity common indicators CI1 and CI2.