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**Agenda Item 3: Status of implementation of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol)**

**Report on the status of implementation of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol)**

Note:

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## **Note by the Secretariat**

In its Decision IG.23/1, the 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 20) (Tirana, Albania, 17-20 December 2017): (a) adopted the revised reporting format for the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols; (b) urged Contracting Parties to use the revised reporting format when submitting their national implementation reports; and (c) requested the Secretariat to submit to each meeting of the Contracting Parties, on the basis of an analysis of the information contained in the national reports, a report on the general advances made in the region, including at the legal and institutional levels, in implementing the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols along with proposals for further measures, as necessary.

In response to this request, and in the spirit of paragraph 2 (ii) of Article 18 of the Barcelona Convention, the Coordinating Unit and the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) invited the Focal Points for SPA/BD to provide a report, for the period running from January 2020 to December 2021, on the application of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol).

The status of progress in implementation and the associated main overall findings should be understood within the limitations which arise from the fact that not all Contracting Parties have submitted their national implementation reports for the 2020-2021 biennium and the difference in the amount of information submitted. The percentage used in presenting statistical responses is that out of the total reporting Contracting Parties. For the purpose of this report: “nearly all” is used for 90% or over, “most” for 70% or over, “many” for 40% or over, “some” for between 40% and 15% and “few” for less than 15%.

It is to be noted that COP 22 (Antalya, Türkiye, 7-10 December 2023) in its decision IG.25/12 adopted the “Criteria for inclusion of Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) in the Directory of Mediterranean Specially Protected Areas, including associated updates in the UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention Reporting System (BCRS)”. Consequently, the BCRS reporting system’s section related to SPA reporting was accordingly updated by the Information and Communication Regional Activity Centre (INFO/RAC) in mid-February 2023; and the Contracting Parties were encouraged to use it for their national reports.

COP 22 Decision IG.25/12 also requested SPA/RAC to provide an analysis of the reports on Specially Protected Areas. On that ground, a separate report analysing the reported data on SPAs is presented to this meeting in another working document.

### **Status of Reporting**

- Number of Contracting Parties to the 1982 SPA Protocol on the 2020-2021 biennium: 21
- Number of Contracting Parties to the 1995 SPA/BD Protocol on the 2020-2021 biennium: 17
- Number of reporting Contracting Parties on the 2018-2019 biennium: 11
- Number of reporting Contracting Parties on the 2020-2021 biennium: 8
- The European Union have answered 18 out of 124 Points reported in this analysis. Nonetheless, its answers are still considered for the present analysis.

## **Report on the status of implementation of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol)**

### **Introduction**

1. SPA/RAC has prepared the “Report on the status of implementation of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol)” for the biennium 2020-2021, which is hereby presented. The status has been drafted based on the information contained in the national implementation reports for the 2020-2021 biennium, submitted by Contracting Parties through the online Barcelona Convention Reporting System (BCRS), as of 30 March 2023. It provides for the SPA/BD Protocol an overall assessment of the status of progress in implementation and associated main overall findings.
2. The reporting format is the one adopted by the 20th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Decision IG.23/1) and updated during the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Decision IG.25/12) and includes the following parts:
  - a) **Part I: Legal and Regulatory Measures.** Part I seeks to determine whether the Contracting Parties have established the legal framework for the protection and conservation of Specially Protected Areas (SPAs), including Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) and those endangered or threatened species of flora and fauna listed in Annexes II and III to the Protocol.
  - b) **Part II: Specially Protected Areas (SPAs).** Part II seeks to collect information on the list of SPAs designated and the measures adopted for their management, including the development and adoption of a management plan for each SPA, which incorporates the elements listed in Article 7 of the Protocol.
  - c) **Part III: Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs).** Part III seeks to gather information on the list of SPAMIs designated and the measures adopted for their management, including the development and implementation of a management plan for each SPAMI which includes regulation of dumping and releases of wastes likely to impair the integrity of the SPAMI, monitoring programmes, introduction and reintroduction of species, and activities carried out in the zone surrounding the area.
  - d) **Part IV: Endangered and Threatened Species.** Part IV seeks to gather information on the protection measures adopted by the Contracting Parties to protect those endangered or threatened species listed in the Annexes to the Protocol.
  - e) **Part V: Monitoring.** Part V seeks to gather information on the implementation of quality status monitoring and Integrated Monitoring and Assessment (IMAP).
  - f) **Part VI: Enforcement Measures.** Part VI seeks to collect information on enforcement to verify compliance with the Protocol.
  - g) **Part VII: Implementation of Regional Action Plans (RAPs).** Part VII seeks to collect information on measures put in place for the implementation of biodiversity RAPs adopted by the Contracting Parties.
3. In this analysis, some of the same difficulties that were met for the previous biennium (2018-2019) were encountered, like unsubmitted or incomplete reports, answers to some questions that are missing or different from what is explained in the comments.

## Progress in Implementation

### a. Legal and Regulatory Measures

4. Reporting Contracting Parties have reported on the legal and regulatory measures put in place to implement the SPA/BD Protocol, as shown in detail below,
5. ***Designation of the terrestrial areas (including wetlands) under its jurisdiction which are in the area to which the SPA/BD Protocol applies (Article 2.1).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (6 out of 8) have designated these areas under different protected area management categories, encompassing mainly Marine Protected Areas.
6. ***Protection, preservation and management in a sustainable and environmentally sound way of areas of particular natural or cultural value, notably by the establishment of SPAs (Article 3.1(a)).*** Most reporting Contracting parties (5 out of 8) indicated the existence of measures for the protection, preservation and sustainable management of SPAs, mainly through the adoption of new laws and decisions and the establishment of new protected areas.
7. ***Protection, preservation and management of endangered or threatened plant and animal species (Article 3.1(b)).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (5 out of 8) have answered this question positively. The protection, preservation and management of endangered or threatened species of flora and fauna have been articulated through either general law (e.g., nature protection acts and environment protection acts) or specific ones (e.g., flora, fauna and habitats protection acts and invasive alien species acts). This adds to the IUCN Red Lists of Threatened Species, the SPA/BD Protocol annexes lists: List of Endangered or Threatened Species (Annex II) and List of Species whose exploitation is regulated (Annex III), EU relevant Directives or the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).
8. ***Compilation of an inventory of the components of marine and coastal biodiversity (Article 3.3).*** Many reporting Contracting Parties (4 out of 7) stated having conducted an inventory of the components of marine and coastal biodiversity. This has been mainly undertaken for marine areas within the framework of the SPA/BD Protocol, as well as relevant EU Directives, such as the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).
9. ***Formulation of a national strategy and an action plan to protect the components of marine and coastal biodiversity (Article 3.4).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (6 out of 7) stated having taken forward the protection of the components of marine and coastal biodiversity through their national biodiversity strategies and associated action plans, and/or Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) strategies. This adds to measures taken within the framework of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).
10. ***Monitoring the components of marine and coastal biodiversity and those processes and categories of activities which have or are likely to have a significant adverse impact on them (Article 3.5).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (6 out of 7) answered this question affirmatively by referring to programmes of observation and monitoring under the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) as well as the SAPBIO process and by making reference to the specific monitoring programmes in protected areas.
11. ***Taking into consideration, in the planning process leading to decisions on projects and activities that could significantly affect protected areas and species and their habitats, of possible direct or indirect, immediate or long-term, impact, including the cumulative impact of projects and activities on habitats (Article 17).*** All reporting Contracting Parties answered this question positively by mainly noting their Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations or Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) directives and regulations.
12. Difficulties most frequently reported in implementing the SPA/BD Protocol are the limited financial resources and technical capabilities.

**b. Specially Protected Areas (SPAs)****i. Measures to protect SPAs**

13. ***Setting up of protected areas within the Protocol's geographical coverage (Article 3.1(a)).***

Most reporting Contracting Parties (6 out of 8) answered this question positively by indicating the SPAs established on their territory during the current reporting period 2020-2021.

14. ***Prohibition of the dumping and any discharge likely to directly or indirectly harm the integrity of SPAs (Article 6.b).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (6 out of 7) reported legislation to be in place prohibiting dumping activities in SPAs. Legislation mainly refers to legislative and administrative measures governing dumping activities in general, which also apply to SPAs. This framework includes maritime, coastal zone or port reception facilities regulations, wastewater treatment, hazardous wastes.

15. ***Regulation of the passage of ships and all stopping or anchoring in the SPAs' extension zone (Article 6.c).*** Many reporting Contracting Parties (3 out of 7) reported having put in place a legal framework regulating the passage and anchoring of ships in SPAs. In addition to the legislative and administrative measures regulating navigation, specifically designed measures are reported to have been adopted restricting or prohibiting the passage and anchoring of ships in SPAs.

16. ***Regulation of the introduction of any species not indigenous to the SPA or of genetically modified species (Article 6.d).*** Many reporting Contracting Parties (3 out of 7) answered this question positively.

17. ***Regulation or prohibition of all exploration activities or activities that involve modifying the soil or subsoil of the land part, of the seabed or of its subsoil in the SPAs (Article 6.e).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (6 out of 7) reported legal and regulatory measures to be in place dealing with offshore activities in SPAs.

18. ***Regulation of scientific research in the SPAs (Article 6.f).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (6 out of 7) reported having adopted measures regulating scientific research in their SPAs. In general, scientific research is subject to a permit issued by the national competent authority or authorities, provided that certain conditions are met.

19. ***Prohibition and regulation of all activities involving taking of species (i.e., fishing, hunting, taking of animals and harvesting of plants and their destruction as well as trade in animals, parts of animals, plants and parts of plants) which originate in SPAs (Article 6.g).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (6 out of 7) reported the taking of species which originate in SPAs to be regulated mainly by wildlife protection, protected areas or hunting and fishing laws, which are tightened up in some SPAs through their specific management instruments.

20. ***Regulation and, if necessary, prohibition of any other activity likely to have an adverse impact on the SPAs. These include activities that may harm or disturb the species or that might endanger the state of conservation of the ecosystems or species or might impair the natural or cultural characteristics of the SPA (Article 6.h).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (6 out of 7) reported having in place measures regulating activities other than the ones above mentioned in their SPAs.

21. ***Traditional subsistence and cultural activities of local populations taken into account when formulating protective measures for SPAs (Article 18).*** Most Contracting Parties (5 out of 7) answered this question positively, some of them referring to specific guidelines on the matter in their SPAs.

## ii. List of SPAs within the protocol's geographical coverage<sup>1</sup>

22. Most (6 out of 7) reporting Contracting Parties filled in information about seventy-six created SPAs in their respective national territories. These SPAs are of various categories (SEPA, special reserves, natural monuments, etc.) and not all of them were created during the period of the reporting exercise. Six areas have their management plans under development and nineteen of them have no management plan.

## iii. Management of SPAs<sup>2</sup>

23. **Adoption of planning, management, supervision and monitoring measures for SPAs (Article 7.1).** Many reporting Contracting Parties (4 out of 7) indicated having adopted the required measures under article 7.1 of the SPA/BD Protocol.

24. **Elaboration and implementation of a management plan for each SPA (Article 7.2 (a)).** Many reporting Contracting Parties (4 out of 7) responded affirmatively. It is indicated by remaining reporting Contracting Parties that though management plans are not in place for some SPAs, measures for the protection of those SPAs have been put in place through other means.

25. **Programmes for the observation and scientific monitoring of changes in the Protocol Areas' ecosystems and on the impact of human activities (Article 7.2 (b)).** Many reporting Contracting Parties (4 out of 7) reported having developed scientific monitoring programmes tracking changes in the state of SPAs.

26. **Measures for the involvement of local communities in the process of managing the protected areas (Article 7.2(c)).** Most reporting Contracting Parties (5 out of 7) reported having put in place measures ensuring the involvement of local communities in the management of protected areas. In doing so, different strategies have been taken ranging from the inclusion of local communities' representatives in the management bodies of SPAs, to public awareness activities in SPAs.

27. **Provision of assistance to local inhabitants to compensate for the possible adverse impact which the protection measures introduced in the SPA might have on their income (Article 7.2 (c)).** Many reporting Contracting Parties (3 out of 7) reported having put in place measures to compensate local inhabitants affected by the establishment of SPAs, by either providing compensation to owners and users of the property right, for the restrictions in the use of protected areas or by employing local inhabitants in the management and maintenance of the protected areas through different projects, for instance, eco-development projects.

28. **Funding mechanisms for managing and promoting the protected areas or income-generating activities that are compatible with the protection measures (Article 7.2(d)).** Most reporting Contracting Parties (6 out of 7) indicated having established funding mechanisms for managing and promoting protected areas, including income-generating activities such as swimming and recreational activities, entry fees, tourist boat route charges and international projects.

29. **Appropriate training for the technical managers and other qualified staff of the protected areas (Article 7.2 (f)).** Many Contracting Parties (4 out of 6) reported providing training to SPAs managers and staff. This has been taken forward in different ways (e.g., workshops, seminars, courses, etc.), including SPA/RAC projects.

30. Difficulties most frequently reported in the creation and management of SPAs are the limited technical capabilities and financial resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Not applicable to the EU

<sup>2</sup> Not applicable to the EU



**c. Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs)<sup>3</sup>**

31. ***Setting up of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) (Article 3.1.a).*** Many reporting Contracting Parties (3 out of 7) reported having established SPAMIs. No new SPAMI were designated during the current reporting period (2020-2021). Two other reporting Contracting Parties indicated work under progress to this aim.
32. ***Elaboration and implementation of a management plan for each SPAMI (Article 7.2.a).*** Many reporting Contracting Parties (4 out of 6) reported having elaborated and implemented a management plan for their SPAMIs.
33. ***Limits on the financial resources along with administrative management difficulties*** are the most frequently reported difficulties met for the creation and management of SPAMIs.

**d. Endangered and threatened species**

34. ***Drawing up of a list of endangered or threatened species of fauna and flora and identification of their distribution in the zones subject to Party's jurisdiction (Article 11.2).*** Many reporting Contracting Parties (4 out of 7) have drawn up lists of endangered or threatened species of flora and fauna at national level (e.g., Red Lists, Red Data Book, Catalogue of Threatened Species), transposing the SPA/BD Protocol and other agreements, such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), or relevant EU Directives. The UNEP/MAP / SPA/RAC MedMPA Network project has been a key driver in drawing up national lists.
35. ***Management of species of flora and fauna listed in Annexes II and III to the Protocol, to ensure their favorable state of conservation (Article 11.2 and Article 12.1).*** Many reporting Contracting Parties (4 out of 7) reported management measures concerning the species listed in Annexes II and III to the SPA/BD Protocol. This has been mainly achieved by either nature or environment protection acts or specific protected species acts. This adds in some reporting Contracting Parties to action and management plans.
36. ***Controlling and, where appropriate, prohibiting the taking, possession or killing, the commercial trade, the transport and the exhibition for commercial purposes of protected species of fauna, particularly those listed in Annex II to the Protocol (Article 11.3.a and Article 12.2).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (5 out of 6) responded positively to this question.
37. ***Controlling and where appropriate prohibiting the disturbance of protected wild fauna, particularly during the period of breeding, incubation, hibernation and migration (Article 11.3.b).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (6 out of 7) indicated having taken measures in that regard.
38. ***Establishment of bilateral or multilateral cooperation (including agreements) to protect and restore the population of migrant species in the area where the Protocol is applied (Article 11.4).*** Many reporting Contracting Parties (4 out of 7) reported having established cooperation arrangements to protect and restore migrant species in the area where the Protocol applies. Cooperation has been established through multilateral agreements, mainly the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS Convention) and its associated agreements, and the Agreement on the Conservation of African- Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA).
39. ***Regulating and where appropriate prohibiting all forms of destruction and disturbance of protected species of flora, particularly those listed in Annex II to the Protocol (Article 11.5 and Article 12.2).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (6 out of 7) answered positively to this question.

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<sup>3</sup> Not applicable to the EU

40. ***Formulation and adoption of measures and plans concerning the ex-situ reproduction, particularly in captivity, of protected fauna, and the growing of protected flora (Article 11.6).*** Ex-situ reproduction programmes addressing the conservation of protected species have been developed by most reporting Contracting Parties (5 out of 7).

41. ***Granting of exemptions to the prohibitions prescribed for the protection of the species listed in the Annexes to the Protocol for scientific, educational, or management purposes necessary to ensure the survival of the species (Article 12.6).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (5 out of 7) reported that exceptions to the prohibitions prescribed for the protection of the species listed in the Annexes to the SPA/BD Protocol are granted as stated in Article 12.6 of the Protocol.

42. ***Taking steps to deal with the deliberate or accidental introduction into the wild of non-indigenous or genetically modified species and prohibiting those that may have harmful impacts on ecosystems habitats or species (Article 13).*** Most reporting Contracting Parties (5 out of 7) stated having adopted measures dealing with the deliberate or accidental introduction of non-indigenous or genetically modified species into the wild. Various legal, policy and administrative frameworks addressing biodiversity are reported to be in place.

43. Technical guidance capabilities were the most frequently reported difficulty for the protection and conservation of species.

#### **e. Monitoring**

44. This Part requires information on implementation of quality status monitoring and Integrated Monitoring and Assessment (IMAP), with focus on monitoring of biodiversity-related Ecological Objectives (EO) (i.e., EO-1 biodiversity, EO-2 non-indigenous species, EO-3 harvest of commercially exploited fish and shellfish, EO-6 sea floor integrity). Some reporting Contracting Parties (2 out of 7) indicated having monitoring activities in place for all the monitored ecological objectives, and others noted ongoing work in this area.

#### **f. Enforcement Measures<sup>4</sup>**

45. Four reporting Contracting Parties have provided information under this section.

#### **g. Implementation of Regional Action Plans (RAPs)**

46. For the nine Regional Action Plans of the SPA and Biodiversity Protocol, the reporting Contracting Parties indicated that the lack of financial resources and of the technical guidance capacities are the main difficulties encountered.

#### **i. Action Plan for the conservation of Cartilaginous Fishes (Chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean Sea (Decision IG21/4)**

47. Seven reporting Contracting Parties reported on the implementation of the Action Plan for the conservation of Cartilaginous Fishes (Chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean Sea, as below:

48. ***Formalize/reinforce synchronous submission of catch, bycatch and discard data to both scientific and management bodies, annually to the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).*** One reporting Contracting Party indicated formalizing the submission of data as requested. Three Contracting parties answered the negative and three others indicated work being under development.

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<sup>4</sup> Not applicable to the EU

49. ***Establish strict legal protection for species listed in Annex II and GFCM recommendation through national laws and regulations.*** Four out of seven reporting Contracting Parties indicated action in that regard by the establishment of strict legal protection for the species listed in Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol and GFCM Recommendation through their national laws and regulations. In two reporting Contracting Parties work is indicated to be under development.
50. ***Support GFCM finning prohibition by enacting national regulations and monitoring their implementation and enforcement.*** Four out of seven reporting Contracting Parties answered this question positively. A reporting Contracting Party indicated that this question was not applicable and another one indicated work under development.
51. ***Complete and disseminate inventories of critical habitats (mating, spawning and nursery grounds).*** Two reporting Contracting Parties have answered this question affirmatively. Four Contracting Parties indicated work under development in this area.
52. ***Increase compliance with obligations to collect and submit species-specific commercial catch and bycatch data to FAO and GFCM, including through increased use of observers.*** Two out of seven reporting Contracting Parties answered this question positively. Three reporting Contracting Parties indicated work under development in this area.
53. ***Comply with obligations under GFCM recommendations to collect and submit data on pelagic shark catches.*** Only one reporting Contracting Party indicated action in this filed to comply with obligations under GFCM recommendations. Two Parties indicated the question is not applicable.
54. ***Improve programmes for the collection and reporting of data from coastal fisheries.*** Three out of seven reporting Contracting Parties answered this question positively and three more indicated work under development.
55. ***Monitor Critically Endangered, Endangered and endemic species.*** Two reporting Contracting Parties answered to this question affirmatively and one indicated work under development. Four other reporting Contracting Parties answered by the negative.
56. ***Submit to the GFCM annual Shark Assessment Reports describing all national target and/or bycatch fisheries.*** Only one out of seven reporting Contracting Parties answered this question positively.
57. ***Develop and adopt (where these do not exist) national Shark Plans and specific regulations for fisheries exploiting chondrichthyans, whether target or bycatch.*** None of the reporting Contracting Parties answered this question positively and three Parties indicated work under development in this area. Three Parties responded negatively, and one Party indicated the question is not applicable.

ii. **Updated Action Plan concerning Species Introductions and Invasive Species in the Mediterranean Sea (Decision IG.22/12)<sup>5</sup>**

58. Seven reporting Contracting Parties reported on the implementation of the Updated Action Plan concerning Species Introductions and Invasive Species in the Mediterranean Sea, as below.
59. ***Set up a mechanism to promote and coordinate the actions listed in paragraph 22 of the Regional Action Plan.*** One reporting Contracting Party answered this question positively. One other indicated work under development.
60. ***Conduct a baseline study to feed the Marine Mediterranean Invasive Species (MAMIAS).*** Only one reporting Contracting Party out of seven answered this question positively. One reporting Contracting Party out of six indicated action taken in that regard.

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<sup>5</sup> Not applicable to the EU

61. ***Development of programmes for data collection and monitoring.*** Three reporting Contracting Parties out of six referred to the data collection and monitoring programmes developed under IMAP Project, as well as the MSFD. The main difficulties reported in this field are financial resources and technical capabilities.

62. ***Launch the procedures for enacting or strengthening national legislation governing the control of alien species introduction.*** Three reporting Contracting Parties out of seven underlined the general domestic legislation regulating the introduction of alien species, as well as the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species (IAS Regulation). Two reporting Contracting Parties noted work under development in this area. One reporting Contracting Party answered that this question is not applicable.

63. ***Develop programmes to raise the awareness of the general public and target groups, including decision-makers, concerning the risks associated with species introduction.*** Three reporting Contracting Parties out of seven responded affirmatively to this question, basing their answers on the training and awareness raising programmes conducted on the risks linked to the introduction of non-native species and on ways of addressing this problem. Two Parties noted that work is under development.

### iii. **Action Plan for the conservation of Bird Species listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol in the Mediterranean (Decision IG21/4)<sup>6</sup>**

64. Seven reporting Contracting Parties reported on the implementation of the Action Plan for the conservation of Bird Species listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol in the Mediterranean, as below.

65. ***Protect legally all bird species listed in Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol.*** Bird species are protected by legislation (e.g., nature protection laws, protected species and sites laws and protection and trade of wild flora and fauna laws) in six reporting Contracting Parties.

66. ***Optimize synergies with international agreements and organizations dedicated to bird conservation.*** Three reporting Contracting Parties (3 out of 6) answered positively to this question.

67. ***Organize specific training courses and workshops in coordination/synergy with international and/or national NGOs.*** Three reporting Contracting Parties out of seven indicated the organization of such courses and workshops and two Parties answered 'no' to this question.

68. ***Establishment / support of research and monitoring programs to fill gaps in the knowledge of threatened species in partnership with other organizations.*** Four reporting Contracting Parties referred to the already established research and monitoring programmes in the context of the Barcelona Convention.

69. ***Establishment and implementation of National Action Plans for the conservation of endangered and threatened bird species in the Mediterranean.*** Four reporting Contracting Parties out of seven indicated work is under development in this area and three answered the negative to this question.

70. ***Identification of areas of importance for birds on land and at sea (mapping of breeding, feeding and wintering areas).*** Three reporting Contracting Parties out of seven responded to this question affirmatively. Four Parties indicated work is under development.

71. ***Legal establishment of protected areas with adequate management plans at breeding sites.*** Four reporting Contracting Parties indicated the establishment of protected areas in their territories for the protection of bird species and breeding sites under the SPA/BD Protocol. One stated that it is still under development.

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<sup>6</sup> Not applicable to the EU

**iv. Updated Action Plan for the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea (Decision IG.22/12)<sup>7</sup>**

72. Seven reporting Contracting Parties reported on the implementation of the Updated Action Plan for the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea, as below.

73. ***Ratify the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) and implement its Resolutions and Recommendations of relevance for the Mediterranean Sea.*** Six out of seven reporting Contracting Parties indicated ratification of the ACCOBAMS Agreement.

74. ***Ensure that cetaceans are covered, at national level, by appropriate regulation measures providing for the elimination of deliberate killing and for the mitigation of the adverse impacts from their interactions with human activities.*** Six reporting Contracting Parties reported having taken regulatory measures to protect cetaceans mainly through enforcement laws.

75. ***Ensure, through regulation or other appropriate approaches, that whale-watching activity is environmentally sound and sustainably conducted.*** Only one reporting Contracting Party referred to specific regulation to monitor and follow-up whale-watching activities. Two other Parties indicated work in progress and three stated that this question is not applicable.

76. ***Undertake the comprehensive survey of abundance and distribution of cetaceans being planned by ACCOBAMS (ACCOBAMS Survey initiative).*** Five reporting Contracting Parties answered to this question affirmatively.

77. ***Assess the cetacean bycatch and depredation in their fisheries and adopt mitigation measures.*** Three reporting Contracting Parties indicated action taken in this regard. Two Parties noted that work is under development in this area and one that this question was not applicable.

78. ***Pursue the development and the implementation of a basin-wide strategy for underwater noise monitoring in the Mediterranean under the Ecological Objective 11 of the EcAp process.*** Only one reporting Contracting Party specifically referred to the development and implementation of a strategy for underwater noise monitoring. Five reporting Contracting Parties indicated ongoing work on this matter under the IMAP.

79. ***Development of acoustic mapping to build a comprehensive picture of the spatial and temporal distribution of anthropogenic noise sources, in particular for the noise hotspot areas identified in the Mediterranean by ACCOBAMS.*** No developments indicated by reporting Contracting Parties. Otherwise, four Reporting Parties indicated work being prepared.

80. ***Promote awareness of the anthropogenic noise impacts on cetaceans, targeting in particular decision makers, key players in the industry organizations and the stakeholders in the shipping sectors.*** Three reporting Contracting Parties have responded to this question positively.

81. ***Establish a list of marine areas under its jurisdiction identified as of special importance for cetaceans.*** Three reporting Contracting Parties indicated having set up marine protected areas for the protection of cetacean. Three others mentioned work being prepared in this field.

**v. Action Plan for the conservation of Marine Vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea (Decision IG20/6)<sup>8</sup>**

82. Seven reporting Contracting Parties reported on the implementation of the Action Plan for the conservation of Marine Vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea, as below.

83. ***Take new vegetation species in Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol into account.*** Only one reporting Contracting Party out of six stated that new vegetation species included in Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol has been considered in their domestic protection measures.

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<sup>7</sup> Not applicable to the EU

<sup>8</sup> Not applicable to the EU

84. ***Create MPAs to conserve marine vegetation.*** Three reporting Contracting Parties out of seven answered positively to this question, by referring to the MPAs established as well as Sites of Community Importance (SCIs). Two Parties indicated work under development in this area for the designation of MPAs.
85. ***Set up a programme for making national inventories on macrophyta species, with staggered planning according to the regions' priorities.*** Only one reporting Contracting Party out of six responded to this question affirmatively. Two Parties indicated that inventories of *macrophyta* species were under development and another Party referred to the need to update its existing inventory.
86. ***Make theoretical probable distribution maps for the main plant assemblages.*** Two reporting Contracting Parties responded to this question positively. Four Parties indicated work under development.
87. ***Implement targeted mapping and inventorying actions (Annex II species, priority sites).*** Three of six reporting Contracting Parties indicated having implemented targeted mapping and inventory actions. Two other reporting Contracting Parties stated that work in this area is under development.
88. ***Establish a programme for setting up monitoring networks for the main marine plant assemblages at national and regional level.*** Two reporting Contracting Parties out of six reported having setting-up monitoring networks for the main marine vegetation assemblages. Two Parties indicated work under development in this area. Main difficulties pointed out are financial resources, administrative management, and technical guidance.
89. ***Set up and/or extend their networks for follow-up of plants in the Mediterranean.*** Only one reporting Contracting Party responded positively to this question.
90. ***To develop short, medium- and long-term action plans according to national and regional priorities.*** Five reporting Contracting Parties out of six negatively answered this question.

#### vi. Action Plan for the management of the Mediterranean Monk Seal

91. Seven reporting Contracting Parties reported on the implementation of the Action Plan for the management of the Mediterranean Monk Seal, as below,
92. ***Has the Party given the monk seal protection status?*** Four reporting Contracting Parties reported having granted protection status to the monk seals.
93. ***For fishing, does the Party explicitly ban the use of dynamite, the carrying of firearms on boats, and all fishing techniques that can endanger monk seals?*** Four reporting Contracting Parties reported having banned fishing techniques that can endanger monk seals, including the use of dynamite.
94. ***If the Party still has breeding monk seal populations, have measures been taken to isolate monk seals from any human activity?*** Two reporting Contracting Parties answered this question positively. Five Contracting parties stated that this question is not applicable.
95. ***In the Party's territory, have SPAs been created to conserve monk seal populations or their potential habitats?*** Three reporting Contracting Parties indicated having established protected areas for the conservation of monk seal populations.
96. ***Has the Party established a list of breeding caves and other habitats that are of importance for monk seal conservation?*** Two reporting Contracting Parties reported having inventoried the breeding caves and other habitats of importance for monk seal conservation. One Party indicated ongoing work in this field.
97. ***Has the Party carried out programmes for data collection on the monk seal?*** Three reporting Contracting Parties reported having in place programmes for the collection of data on monk seals.

98. ***Has the Party developed programmes for awareness raising, information and training concerning monk seal conservation?*** Four reporting Contracting Parties reported having developed awareness raising and training programmes concerning monk seals. This has been channeled through the relevant ministries and/or NGOs and cover a variety of actions such as wider distribution of informative material (i.e., booklets, brochures, etc.).

99. ***Does the Party have an action plan for the conservation of monk seals and its potential habitats?*** Two reporting Contracting Parties indicated having developed an action plan for the conservation of the monk seal. However, Parties noted that although action plans are not in place, measures to protect monk seals have been taken in the framework of protecting species acts.

**vii. Action Plan for the conservation of Mediterranean Marine Turtles (Decision IG21/4)<sup>9</sup>**

100. Seven reporting Contracting Parties reported on the implementation of the Action Plan for the conservation of Mediterranean Marine Turtles, as below:

101. ***Protection of turtles—general species protection.*** Six reporting Contracting Parties stated having a legal framework in place for the protection of marine turtles. Reference is made to the specific measure to protect the species of Loggerhead turtles and Green turtles.

102. ***Enforce legislation to eliminate deliberate killing.*** Five reporting Contracting Parties indicated enforcement measures to eliminate deliberate killing of marine turtles. One Party noted ongoing work in this area.

103. ***Habitat protection and management (nesting, mating, feeding, wintering and key migration passages).*** Three reporting Contracting Parties indicated the establishment of habitat protection and management programmes for marine turtles. Reference is made by one reporting Contracting Party to protection through Natura 2000 network along with national fisheries law and regulations. One Party indicated work being in preparation on this subject.

104. ***Setting up and implementing management plans.*** Two reporting Contracting Parties out of six answered this question affirmatively. One of them underlined the role of Regional Activity Center for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) and MAVA foundation in the preparation of the plan. Two reporting Contracting Parties indicated that this point was not applicable for them.

105. ***Restoration of damaged nesting habitats.*** Two reporting Contracting Parties answered this question positively, one of them giving details of the protocols in place to that end. Five Parties indicated that this question was not applicable.

106. ***Fishing regulations (depth, season, gear) in key areas.*** Four reporting Contracting Parties reported having established fishing regulations in key areas. One of them noted its awareness raising programmes to fishermen and the action of the Coast Guard in preventing marine turtles fishing. Three Parties noted ongoing work in developing their legal framework to regulate fishing of marine turtles.

107. ***Setting up and/or improving operation of rescue centers.*** Three reporting Contracting Parties stated having established rescue centers for marine turtles. One of them noted that a project to that end (Monteaqua Project financed by Norwegian Embassy) was launched and expected to be finalized during 2020.

108. ***Identification of new mating, feeding and wintering areas and key migration passages.*** Two reporting Contracting Parties responded to this question affirmatively. One of them specifically mentioned its programme for the *caretta caretta* in the Adriatic Sea, which is an important area for the wintering and feeding of this species. Three Parties noted work under development in this field.

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<sup>9</sup> Not applicable to the EU

109. ***Elaboration and execution of cooperative research projects of regional importance aimed at assessing the interaction between turtles and fisheries.*** Two reporting Contracting Parties out of six responded to this question affirmatively, one of them referring to LIFE projects on this area (LIFE MED Turtles and LIFE Euroturtles), and two Parties indicated ongoing work to develop research projects assessing the interaction between turtles and fisheries.

110. ***Tagging and genetic analysis (as appropriate).*** Only one reporting Contracting Party indicated having conducted tagging programmes and genetic analysis.

111. ***Modification of gear, methods and strategies.*** Only one reporting Contracting Party responded to this question affirmatively. Three Parties indicated work under development in this area.

112. ***Setting up and/or improving long-term monitoring programmes.*** Two reporting Contracting Parties responded to this question affirmatively, by referring to the programmes established within the framework of IMAP and relevant EU Directives, such as the Habitats and MSFD Directives. Three Parties noted work under development in this field.

113. ***Setting up stranding networks.*** Three reporting Contracting Parties indicated the establishment of stranding networks for marine turtles.

114. ***Public awareness and information campaigns in particular for fishermen and local populations.*** Six reporting Contracting Parties reported having established awareness raising programmes and training activities on the conservation of marine turtles targeting fishermen and local populations. This has been done through action in nesting sites or care centres for marine turtles.

115. ***Training courses.*** Two reporting Contracting Parties answered to this question affirmatively.

116. ***Elaboration of national action plans and assessment of progress in implementation.*** Two reporting Contracting Party responded to this question affirmatively.

**viii. Action Plan for the conservation of Habitats and Species associated with seamounts, underwater caves and canyons, aphotic engineering benthic invertebrates and chemo-synthetic phenomena, in the Mediterranean Sea (Dark Habitats Action Plan) (Decision IG21/4)<sup>10</sup>**

117. Two reporting Contracting Parties indicated that the Plan is not applicable for them. Five other reporting Contracting Parties reported on the implementation of the Dark Habitats Action Plan, as below.

118. ***Making a summary of knowledge of dark populations and their distribution around the Mediterranean in the form of a geo-referenced information system.*** Only one reporting Contracting Party noted studies undertaken to expand the knowledge of dark populations. Three Parties indicated ongoing work in this area.

119. ***Identify and assess proven pressures on each of the various types of habitats.*** Three reporting Contracting Parties answered by the negative to this question and two other Parties indicated ongoing work.

120. ***Revise the reference list of types of marine habitat for the selection of sites for inclusion in the national inventories of natural sites of conservation interest, to consider dark assemblages.*** No affirmative response to this question was reported. Three Parties noted work under development in this area.

121. ***Revise the list of endangered or threatened species in order to take account of dark assemblages' species.*** No reporting Contracting Party responded to this question affirmatively and three Parties noted ongoing work in this field.

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<sup>10</sup> Not applicable to the EU



122. **Promote the identification of areas of interest for the conservation of dark assemblages in the Mediterranean and carry out concerted actions in national and/or cross-border sites.** Only a reporting Contracting Party reported on actions to identify areas of interest for the conservation of dark habitats in the Mediterranean.

123. **Finalize the implementing of marine protected areas (MPAs) in already identified sites at national level and outside waters that lie within national jurisdiction.** No affirmative response to this question received. All the five responding Parties indicated work under development in this area.

124. **Propose the creation of new MPAs.** Two reporting Contracting Parties out of five referred to studies carried out addressing the creation of MPAs for the protection of dark habitats, and two noted ongoing work in this area.

125. **Extent existing MPAs to integrate nearby sites that host dark assemblages.** Only one reporting Contracting Party answered this question affirmatively.

126. **Introduce national legislation to reduce negative impacts.** Two reporting Contracting Parties out of five answered positively this question.

127. **Integrate taking dark assemblages into account within impact studies procedures.** Three reporting Contracting Parties out of five responded to this question affirmatively and two Parties reported ongoing work to factor dark assemblages into impact studies procedures.

128. **Step up awareness and information about dark assemblages with the various actors.** Four reporting Contracting Parties reported ongoing work in this process.

129. **Implement monitoring systems.** Only one reporting Contracting Party responded affirmatively to this question.

**ix. Updated Action Plan for the conservation of the Coralligenous and Other Calcareous Bio-concretions in the Mediterranean Sea (Decision IG.22/12)<sup>11</sup>**

130. Seven reporting Contracting Parties reported on the implementation of the Regional Action Plan for the conservation of Coralligenous and Other Calcareous Bio-concretions, as below.

131. **Improve habitat modeling methods could provide new predictive models on Coralligenous distribution and guide cost-effective field surveys for data acquisition.** Only one reporting Contracting Party out of six reported having improved habitat modelling methods and predictive models on Coralligenous distribution either through scientific research or ongoing projects.

132. **Promote research programs on Coralligenous assemblages and maerl beds.** Two reporting Contracting Parties out of six reported having promoted research programs on Coralligenous assemblages and maerl beds, and two Parties stated that programmes are under development to that end.

133. **Develop and implement legislation initiatives for the conservation of Coralligenous assemblages.** Three reporting Contracting Parties out of five indicated having developed and implemented legislation initiatives to protect Coralligenous assemblages.

134. **Coordinate the design of an Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Program for the assessment of the state Coralligenous/maerl assemblages in view to be included in the assessment of the state of the Mediterranean.** Only one reporting Contracting Party out of five responded affirmatively to this question.

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<sup>11</sup> Not applicable to the EU

### Main overall findings

- Most reporting Contracting Parties have designated Specially Protected Areas (SPAs), as well as the measures for their protection, preservation, and sustainable management. This is a living process, with ongoing work as new SPAs are being established.
- Management Plans for SPAs are reported to have been developed by many reporting Contracting Parties. In addition, as specifically indicated by some reporting Contracting Parties, though management plans are not in place for some SPAs, measures for the protection of those SPAs have been articulated through other means. As regards the effective management of SPAs, it seems that further work is still needed in that area.
- In most Contracting Parties' reporting, measures are indicated as having been taken to integrate scientific research in their SPAs to regulate offshore activities and the taking of species, dumping activities and the passage and anchoring of ships. Measures include those taken under the SPAs and or SPAMIs management plans.
- Appropriate training for the technical managers and other qualified staff of SPAs was established by many reporting Contracting Parties. This has been taken forward in different ways, including SPA/RAC training courses.
- Most reporting Contracting Parties noted their programmes for the observation and scientific monitoring of changes in the Protocol Areas' ecosystems and all of them indicated considering the impact of human activities. Many reporting Contracting Parties reported measures in place for the involvement of local communities in the process of managing protected areas.
- Most reporting Contracting Parties indicated the diverse funding mechanisms for the management and promotion of protected areas or income-generating activities that are compatible with the protection measures.
- It seems that the monitoring of the biodiversity related Ecological Objectives within the framework of the Integrated Monitoring Assessment Programme (IMAP) requires strengthening collective and national efforts on EO1 (Biodiversity). EO2 (Non-indigenous species) and (EO6 (Sea-floor integrity) are also still requiring effort.
- The List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) currently consists of 39 sites. Within the 2020-2021 biennium, no new SPAMIs were included.
- Regulatory protection measures for endangered or threatened species are reported to be in place in most reporting Contracting Parties.
- Inventories of the components of the biological diversity important for its conservation and sustainable use are indicated to be in place in many reporting Contracting Parties, with particular emphasis on marine areas. This has been mainly achieved by transposing the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol), as well as relevant European Union Directives, such as the Habitats Directive.
- Many reporting Contracting Parties mention listing species that are endangered or threatened at the national level, or the ongoing updating of existing lists and identification of their distribution in the zones subject to Party's jurisdiction.
- Measures and plans concerning the ex-situ reproduction or reintroduction of wild protected fauna are indicated having been established in most reporting Contracting Parties.
- Most reporting Contracting Parties have indicated the adoption of measures dealing with the deliberate or accidental introduction into the wild of non-indigenous or genetically modified species.
- Action Plan for the conservation of Cartilaginous Fishes (Chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean Sea: Data synchronization and submission, preparation, collection, and submission of data on pelagic shark catches, development and adoption of national Shark Action Plans and submission

- to the GFCM of annual Shark Assessment Reports are areas which appear to require further action to progress on the implementation of this Plan.
- Updated Action Plan concerning Species Introductions and Invasive Species in the Mediterranean Sea: It seems that further efforts should be made to effectively address the threats that invasive species represent to the marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean region. Actions should be reinforced as regarding the set-up of a mechanism to promote and coordinate the actions listed in paragraph 22 of the RAP and populating the Marine Mediterranean Invasive Alien Species (MAMIAS).
  - Action Plan for the conservation of Bird Species listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol in the Mediterranean: Significant efforts have been made in advancing in the implementation of this Plan by reporting Contracting Parties. Nevertheless, efforts need to be made for the establishment and implementation of National Action Plans for the conservation of endangered and threatened bird species.
  - Updated Action Plan for the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea: Significant efforts have been undertaken by Contracting Parties in implementing this Plan. Room for improvement appears to be in acoustic mapping to build a comprehensive picture of the spatial and temporal distribution of anthropogenic noise sources.
  - Action Plan for the conservation of Marine Vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea : It appears that there is a need to increase efforts to advance in the implementation of this Plan, by developing national action plans according to new priorities, setting up and extending national networks on this field, setting up programmes for making national inventories on *macrophyta* species and taking new vegetation species in Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol into account.
  - Action Plan for the management of the Mediterranean Monk Seal: Efforts made by Contracting Parties for the conservation of the monk seal are linked to the presence of this species in their national waters. It is worth pointing out that some reporting Contracting Parties are developing several projects and programmes aimed at protecting the Mediterranean Monk Seal.
  - Action Plan for the conservation of Mediterranean Marine Turtles: It appears that efforts should be intensified to further advance in the implementation of the plan in the following areas: habitat protection and management, tagging and genetic analysis and training courses.
  - Action Plan for the conservation of Habitats and Species associated with seamounts, underwater caves and canyons, aphotic engineering benthic invertebrates and chemo-synthetic phenomena, in the Mediterranean Sea (Dark Habitats Action Plan) : A few initiatives have been put in place by several Contracting Parties, which indicate the need to continue and strengthen efforts to further advance in the implementation of this Plan.
  - Updated Action Plan for the conservation of the Coralligenous and Other Calcareous Bioconcretions in the Mediterranean Sea: Actions taken by reporting Contracting Parties signal positive progress in implementation. To further enhance implementation, it seems that focus should be put on the promotion of research programs on coralligenous assemblages and maërl beds and on designing an integrated monitoring and assessment program for the assessment of the state of coralligenous/maërl assemblages.

Difficulties most frequently reported in implementing the SPA/BD Protocol are mainly the limited financial resources and technical capabilities. Administrative management concerns seem also to be facing several aspects of the implementation.