



UNITED
NATIONS

EP

UNEP/MED WG.502/4



UNEP



UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

21 May 2021
Original: English

Fifteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

Videoconference, 23-25 June 2021

Agenda Item 4: Progress report on activities carried out to implement the Biodiversity and Ecosystems core theme since the Fourteenth meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

Progress report on the activities carried out to implement the Biodiversity and Ecosystems core theme since the Fourteenth meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

Note:

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) and United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any State, Territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of their frontiers or boundaries.

© 2021 United Nations Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP)
Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC)
Boulevard du Leader Yasser Arafat
B.P. 337 - 1080 Tunis Cedex - Tunisia
E-mail: car-asp@spa-rac.org

Table of Contents

I. GOVERNANCE	1
Strategic Outcome 1.1. Contracting Parties supported in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols, Regional Strategies and Action Plans.	1
Strategic Outcome 1.5. MAP knowledge and MAP information system enhanced and accessible for policy-making, increased awareness and understanding.....	3
Strategic Outcome 1.6. Raised awareness and outreach.	3
II. BIODIVERSITY	5
Strategic Outcome 3.1. Strengthening regional implementation of the obligations under the Barcelona Convention, and its relevant Protocols and other instruments.	5
Strategic Outcome 3.2. Development of new action plans, programmes and measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines for the conservation of Coastal and Marine biodiversity and ecosystems.	6
Strategic Outcome 3.3. Strengthening national implementation of biodiversity conservation policies, strategies and legislation measures.	9
Strategic Outcome 3.4. Monitoring, inventory and assessment of biodiversity with focus on endangered and threatened species, nonindigenous species and key habitats.	10
Strategic Outcome 3.5. Technical assistance and capacity building at regional, sub-regional and national levels to strengthen policy implementation and compliance with biodiversity -related national legislation.	13
Strategic Outcome 3.6. Enhanced cooperation at regional, sub- regional and national levels to protect and conserve biodiversity and ecosystems.	15
III. Climate change	16
Strategic Outcome 7.2. Development of new action plans, programmes and measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines.	16

Progress report on the activities carried out to implement the Biodiversity and Ecosystems core theme since the Fourteenth meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

Reporting period: May 2019 – April 2021

I. GOVERNANCE

Strategic Outcome 1.1. Contracting Parties supported in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols, Regional Strategies and Action Plans.

1. SPA/RAC undertook, in fluent coordination with Contracting Parties, the elaboration of the Post-2020 SAPBIO. Within this framework, guidance was provided to the drafting of the Post-2020 SAPBIO.
2. The Post-2020 SAPBIO Advisory Committee was established, and three online meetings were held in 2020 the 2nd of April and in 2021 (April 16th and May 5th).
3. The elaboration of the Post-2020 SAPBIO is based on needs and priorities identified in a participatory way during a bottom-up process with the Mediterranean Countries at national level. It is aligned and harmonised with the global frameworks and processes in particular the Sustainable Development Goals and the ongoing draft CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, expected to be adopted in October 2021 by CBD COP 15. SPA/RAC attended a series of CBD virtual sessions since July 2020 to achieve that alignment, including thematic consultations, the pre-SBSTTA 24 (Feb 2021) and SBSTTA 24 (May-June 2021) meetings, and contributed to the review of Post 2020-related CBD documents with Mediterranean views.
4. Twenty-one (21) national documents on Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity preservation beyond 2030 were produced by Barcelona Convention Parties and virtual national consultation workshops involving national stakeholders were undertaken during the process.
5. Four Post-2020 SAPBIO sub-regional orientation documents were prepared to ensure a high level of coordination and a smooth passage of information from the national process to the elaboration of the draft Post-2020 SAPBIO. These documents were the subject of four sub-regional virtual consultation workshops.
6. The draft Post-2020 SAPBIO document was submitted for consultation to the Advisory Committee and reviewed by two meetings of SAPBIO National Correspondents.
7. A prefinal draft document was developed before initiating the Post-2020 SAPBIO endorsement and proposal for adoption process.

Resource mobilization:

8. During the reporting period, beside the new externally funded projects implemented with UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit, such as IMA/MPA project, EcApMed III project and MedProgramme, SPA/RAC has signed four (4) and will sign in the coming weeks two (2) more financing agreements (external funds) focusing on the implementation of the 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 PoW activities, with a total amount of about 2,250,00 €; Following, is a summary of the main relevant information about these projects:
9. The “MedBycatch” project phase 2 “Understanding Mediterranean multi-taxa ‘bycatch’ of vulner-able species and testing mitigation- a collaborative approach”: The Med Bycatch Project phase 2 is financed by MAVa (3 976 087.29 €; 622 259,38 € to SPA/RAC) and jointly implemented by SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN Med, BirdLife-Europe and Central Asia (Project coordinator), MEDASSET, WWF and several national partners of the beneficiary countries. The project has started in July 2020 and will end in October 2022. It aims to support Croatia, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey to collect data related to the bycatch of the vulnerable species according to the GFCM Mediter-ranean and black sea bycatch protocol as well as to identify, test and propose

measures to mitigate bycatch reduce the bycatch of the vulnerable species. The project is also providing support to the POST 2020 SAPBIO elaboration process. SPA/RAC is involved in the project transversal activities targeting all beneficiary countries and is coordinating the activities in Tunisia in collaboration with AAO/BirdLife-Tunisie, the National Fisheries Institutions INSTM and DGPA, the Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment and the WWF North Africa.

10. The “Co-managed No-Take Zones/MPAs” project “Empowering the legacy: scaling up co-managed and financially sustainable No-Take Zones / Marine Protected Areas”. The NTZ/ MPA is financed by MAVA (3.498.520 €; 809 163 € to SPA/RAC) and jointly implemented by SPA/RAC, AGIR, HCMR, LIFE, MedPAN, Notre Grand Bleu, BlueSeeds and WWF (Lead Partner) and several national partners of the beneficiary countries. SPA/RAC will support the relevant national authorities of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey, through a participatory approach, in updating, developing and implementing management plans for pilot MPAs. SPA/RAC will also organize the 2022 edition of the Mediterranean Symposium on Marine Habitats Conservation. The concerned national authorities will be supported in elaborating and adopting National Actions Plans for the conservation of marine vegetation and coralligenous habitats. The project is also providing support to the POST 2020 SAPBIO elaboration process.

11. The “Marine Turtles” project phase 2 (July 2020-October 2022): financially supported by the MA-VA foundation (283,245 Euros). Its main objective is to contribute to the effective and sustainable protection of the Mediterranean marine turtles and their habitats, mainly the Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and the Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). The project is coordinated by SPA/RAC in close collaboration with Archelon, Dekamer, IUCN-Med, MEDASSET, MEDPAN, NMPZ WWF Turkey, WWF Greece, WWF North Africa. The main activities of the project are: Systematic sea turtles nesting monitoring programme is put in place according to the IMAP guidelines; Data on nesting areas is included in the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform; National Stranding networks is reinforced in many Mediterranean countries; Indicative map of the important Sea Turtle Areas identified; Relevant partners have capacities and resources for addressing sea turtles’ conservation (incl. practitioners in the Western Med); Adequate legal frameworks are established, and NAPs developed, approved and implemented; Sustainable sea turtles monitoring schemes established. The project is implemented in Albania, Algeria, Egypt, Greece, Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia and Turkey.

12. The “QUIETSEA” project: Assisting (sub) regional cooperation for the practical implementation of the MSFD second cycle by providing methods and tools for D11 (underwater noise) (February 2021-January 2023) funded by the European Commission (32.739 Euros) and developed by a consortium made up of 10 entities from 10 countries, and coordinated by the CTN-Marine Technology Center del Mar. The main activities are: Identifying specific impact indicators (for sensitive species marine mammals) to enable D11C2 risk-based assessment; Promoting the consolidation of pressure and impact indicators for D11C1; Providing common methodologies to facilitate the implementation of assessment frameworks and setting thresholds values; Delivering two tools for effective risk based management of D11C1 and D11C2 to assist regional and subregional cooperation for the GES assessment; Building capacities to ensure knowledge transfer, capitalization of results beyond the life of the project and results that align with and support MSFD. The Beneficiaries countries are Cyprus, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Monaco, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Tunisia.

13. The “Med-Monk Seal” project: Enhancing knowledge and awareness on monk seal in the Mediterranean; this project proposal is submitted for fund to the Monk Seal Alliance. The requested amount is 300 000 Euros, to be implemented from June 2021-May 2023. The overall objective of the Project is to support the Contracting Parties of the south Mediterranean countries to implement the Priority Goals stated in the newly updated Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Mediterranean Monk Seal.

14. The “ENSERES” project: ENhancing Socio-Ecological RESilience in Mediterranean coastal area. The project was developed by SPA/RAC (project co-leader and partner) in collaboration with the European Topic Centre, University of Malaga (ETC-UMA: project leader), the Mediterranean Cities Network (MedCities), the Network of Marine Protected Areas Managers in the Mediterranean (MedPAN), the Tyre Coast Nature Reserve (Lebanon), the Municipality of Sfax (Tunisia), and the Mediterranean Coast and Sea Foundation (MEDSEA Foundation). The PAP/RAC, Plan Bleu and

SCP/RAC joined the project as associated partners and are expected to play a role in project steering and result dissemination. The project will be funded by the EC ENI CBC MED Programme. The project's focus is on transferring and mainstreaming ecosystem-based management basics to implement ICZM processes in multi-level conservation and territorial practices leading to better prepared communities and natural goods. More particularly, the ENSERES project would allow SPA/RAC to enhance MPA management by establishing new SPAMI Twinning Programmes and in contributing to the efforts of fundraising for the Post-2020 SAPBIO, through a donor conference and event. The total budget requested from EC is 1,027,929 Euros, from which 200,000 Euros are for SPA/RAC. In April 2021, the project leader has been notified about the positive evaluation of the project. During the second half of May a negotiation phase aiming at the signature of the grant contract between the project leader (ETC-UMA) and ENI took place. The project is expected to start in June 2021 for a total duration of 24 months.

Strategic Outcome 1.5. MAP knowledge and MAP information system enhanced and accessible for policy-making, increased awareness and understanding.

15. Georeferenced data collected within the framework of the implementation of GEF Adriatic, MSP Pilot (IMELS) in Albania and MAVA marine turtles' project in Libya, Lebanon, Spain, and Tunisia, have been published on the current Mediterranean Marine biodiversity Platform (MBP). Additional data will be uploaded upon their elaboration.

16. The Mediterranean Marine biodiversity Platform (MBP) redesign has started with an IT services company. The MBP will be composed by a regional node managed by SPA/RAC and national nodes. The national node could be used and managed by Contracting Parties as needed as SDI for their georeferenced data. Contracting Parties can also use the regional node. The MBP is expected to be ready for testing by early July 2021.

17. MAMIAS web application has been redesigned, its content updated and ready for being tested online. The official launching is planned for the end of July 2021 (including the organization of a dedicated webinar with SPA/BD National Focal Points. The beta version of the web application could be accessed at <http://dev.mamias.org> for testing purpose.

18. The updated format for the periodic review of SPAMIs, that was adopted by COP 21 Decision IG.24/6, is being developed into a web application: the "SPAMI Evaluation System". This web application is linked to the SPAMI Collaborative Platform. An IT services company was hired by SPA/RAC in December 2020 for this purpose. Work is underway and the online system is expected to be ready for testing by late May/early June 2021.

Strategic Outcome 1.6. Raised awareness and outreach.

19. Several marine biodiversity-related communication material and tools were prepared and disseminated:

- The [Arabic version of the ID Guide](#) on vulnerable species accidentally caught in the Mediterranean Sea in Arabic within the MAVA MedBycatch project.
- The [Arabic version of the Booklet "The Science of Marine Protected Areas"](#), with the financial support of The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and the European Union through the IMAP-MPA and MedMPA Network projects.
- "Retta and Mydas Journey" Colouring comic strip in [Arabic](#), [French](#) and [English](#), printed and used for raising awareness activities by local NGOs, with the contribution of the MAVA Turtles project.
- Posters on the Kuriat Islands future MPA in Tunisia, produced and disseminated within the Kuriat project funded by MAVA in collaboration with APAL (*Agence de Protection et d'Aménagement du Littoral*) and NGB (*Notre Grand Bleu*) association, to inform the MPA

users and raise awareness about the islands [fish](#), [non-indigenous species](#), [birds](#) and [marine turtles](#).

- Videos on the Kuriat Islands to promote the co-management of MPAs in Tunisia ([Arabic](#), [English](#), [French](#) - Views: [6K on Facebook](#)) and the conservation of the marine turtles ([Arabic](#), [English](#), [French](#)), with the support of MedKeyHabitats II, MedBycatch, Turtles projects funded by MAVA.
- A video on the GEF Adriatic project results, and more specifically on the [IMAP marine survey in Patok-Rodoni Bay](#), disseminated during a national online meeting for Albanian authorities (6 April 2020) and published on SPA/RAC social media.

20. Furthermore, SPA/RAC organized and contributed to several events to raise awareness on biodiversity conservation and to inform about its programmes and projects:

- SPA/RAC established a partnership with the Tunisia Cinema Foundation to organize the 2020 edition of EnviroFest, the Environmental film festival in Tunisia, in order to raise awareness on marine habitats and species conservation in particular in coastal cities through film screenings, debates, mini-workshops for kids, photo exhibition on marine habitats (La Marsa on 28-29 June 2020; Bizerte 15-16 July 2020; Monastir, 13-14 August 2020; Tunis, 25-29 December 2020) with the support of MedKeyHabitats II, MedBycatch, Turtles projects funded by MAVA. The estimated number of spectators for the whole event is 4600. During the event in Tunis, the SPA/RAC organised a debate, partially held online, with the participation of sharks and fisheries experts. On this occasion, the film Sharkwater extinction was made available online for a week and contributed to raise awareness about shark's conservation of more than 3K users.
- SPA/RAC organized a webinar on the MPA Kuriat Island co-management, in partnership with the Tunisian Ministry of the Environment, APAL, the Institut National des Sciences et des Technologies de la Mer (INSTM) and the association NGB (18 June 2020).
- SPA/RAC and MedPAN organized a webinar attended by 120 participants to present the new edition of MAPAMED (22 April 2021).
- SPA/RAC contributed to the following webinars: 1/ Webinar to celebrate the national and international environment day organized by the Tunisian Ministry of Environment and WWF North-Africa (20 May 2020); 2/ The first MSP global online seminar on Marine Spatial Planning and Sustainable Blue Economy (in Arabic) organised by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO on 27 May 2020; 3/ Webinar entitled « L'environnement à l'heure de l'après COVID19 » organized by the Tunisian association for United Nations (9 June 2020); 4/ Forum mondial de la mer 2020, contribution on ocean governance for biodiversity conservation – 12,000 participants (15 July 2020); 5/ Webinar for journalists from the Maghreb region on the role of MPAs in adapting to climate change, with the NGO Africa 21 (22 September 2020); 6/ Webinar on migratory birds in Tunisia, with AAO - Birdlife (23 October 2020); 7/ BIODDEV 2030 workshop, with AFD and WWF North Africa – participation in the panel discussion on the issues related to the decline of biodiversity in Tunisia and in the Mediterranean (3 December 2020); 8/ Webinar organized by BlueSeeds to launch the new guide on Financing Mechanisms for Mediterranean MPAs, that has been elaborated in the framework of the MAVA funded NTZ/MPA project ; 9/ EC-TAIEX Environment Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA) Sub-Regional Workshop to present the implementation of the SPA/BD Protocol (17 February 2021); 10/ Lecture on the Barcelona Convention in the framework of the "Environmental Law" course for the benefit of the students of the international Erasmus+ Master's degree, entitled "Management of Mediterranean Environmental Changes", and based at the Faculty of Sciences of Monastir (3 March 2021); 11/ EC-TAIEX EPPA Sub-Regional Workshop to contribute to the discussion on the EPPA Study and Recommendations for the designation of Marine Protected Areas in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro and to share updates on the Post-2020 MPAs & OECMs Regional Strategy elaboration process (20-21 April 2021).

21. SPARAC provided a contribution to the development of a communication pack for MAP flagship publications, i. e. SoED 2019 through the translation in Arabic of the SOED summary and key messages. SPA/RAC supported, also, the organization of the virtual conference on the Environment and Development Report in the Mediterranean and the orientations and perspectives for the

sustainable development in Tunisia, by Plan Bleu and the Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment (MALE) of Tunisia (16 February 2021).

22. Goodies and promotional material were produced:

- SPA/RAC 2021 agenda with illustration and messages on biodiversity conservation printed and disseminated.
- Dissemination products for the MedBycatch/Marine turtles/NTZ/MPA projects funded by MAVA (reusable masks and bags made from upcycled fabric) disseminated among local partners, fishers, bycatch observers, and during public events.

II. BIODIVERSITY

Strategic Outcome 3.1. Strengthening regional implementation of the obligations under the Barcelona Convention, and its relevant Protocols and other instruments.

23. The Ad hoc Group of experts for MPAs in the Mediterranean (AGEM) has been set up during the first semester of 2020, thanks to an online survey among the SPA/BD Focal Points. Prior to that, a list of candidates has been compiled with the contribution of the SPA/BD Focal Points. The composition of the 16 selected independent experts shows a full gender equality (8 female and 8 male members) and a good geographic representativeness of all the Mediterranean ecological sub-regions.

24. The first meeting of AGEM was held on 8 December 2020, by teleconference. The meeting elected a chair and a vice-chair and agreed on the AGEM programme of work for 2021 and its working modalities.

25. The second meeting of AGEM was held on 3-4 May 2021, by teleconference. The meeting reviewed and discussed the first draft of the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean and agreed on draft Criteria for inclusion of SPAs in the SPA directory and on considerations for identifying and reporting OECMs in the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment.

26. The AGEM Chair and Vice-Chair will attend the 15th meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points to report about the AGEM works and to present the outputs issued during the previous period.

27. SPAMI twinning activities are planned part in the framework of the ongoing MAVA-funded Co-managed No-Take Zones/MPAs project and the to-be-started EU ENI CBC Med-funded ENSERES project.

28. The NTZ-MPA project will support the development of a SPAMI Twinning Programme between the Al Hoceima National Park and SPAMI (Morocco) and tentatively the Cabo de Gata-Nijar National Park and SPAMI (Spain).

29. The ENSERES project will support the development of a SPAMI Twinning Programme between the Tyre Coast Nature Reserve (Lebanon) and the Medes Islands Nature Reserve (Spain), and the Kneiss Islands Nature Reserve (Tunisia) and the Côte Bleue Marine Park (France).

30. The 3rd edition of the Mediterranean MPA Forum jointly lead by SPA/RAC, MedPAN and WWF, initially planned for late-2020, has been postponed to the end of 2021 due to the Pandemic situation.

31. The process related to the development of the post-2020 Mediterranean roadmap is still ongoing. Its goal is to deliver an operational and concrete roadmap to achieve the MPA targets in line with international commitments, especially the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework that will be agreed upon in October 2021 by the CBD COP 15.

32. A survey was launched in October 2020 to the MPA community aiming at prioritizing the limiting factors hindering the achievement of MPA objectives. More than 360 answers were received and analyzed, then presented to 7 thematic Working groups in November 2020 to discuss them and provide ideas on how to overcome them. These feedback from these working groups serves as an important input to shape and feed the roadmap.

33. Three Steering Committee meetings were organised (in February and July 2020 and in January 2021) to follow closely the whole process and provide guidance and insights on the way to proceed. During these discussions, it was agreed to hold Virtual Forum Session in mid-2021 to collect more input for the first draft of the roadmap and assess the feasibility to hold a face-to-face event in late 2021 in Monaco during which the post-2020 roadmap would be finalized.
34. Draft Concepts to set up the SPAMI Day and SPAMI Certificate were elaborated and circulated for consultation among SPA/BD focal points and key stakeholders. The draft concepts are presented to the 15th meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points meeting for review and endorsement.
35. The concepts are meant to address the challenges related to communication and outreach about SPAMIs, in particular, and effective MPA management in general, at the Mediterranean level and beyond, and to establish a dynamic of exchange and communication among SPAMI managers and other stakeholders around the Mediterranean.
36. Exchanges took place with CBD marine and coastal and islands programme on envisaging work for the conservation of deep sea Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems through collaboration between RSOs and RFMOs. According to exchanges, GFCM was approached by UNEP/MAP and SPA/RAC to discuss common involvement on deep seas spatial conservation issues in areas within EBSAs, and the possibility of future collaboration with the CBD on that. Two working teleconferences focused on spatial management were done with GFCM, ACCOBAMS, and IUCN on June 25th, 2020 and on February 2nd, 2021 under coordination of MAP Coordinating Unit to draft a document on common focus of work for spatial management, including feasible deep-sea areas where work in synergy might take place for their conservation and enhanced management.
37. REMPEC and SPA/RAC developed in cooperation a draft Guidance Document for the identification and designation of Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs) in relation to SPAMIs, supported within the framework of the Cooperation Agreement between the Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea Protection (IMELS) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
38. The draft PSSA Guidance Document was disseminated among participants of the Adriatic Region Workshop on PSSAs and the Mediterranean Seminar on PSSAs (Tirana, Albania, 9-12 December 2019), organised by SPA/RAC in collaboration with REMPEC, with the purpose of providing information regarding the regulatory elements of PSSAs and the potential policy tools that can be leveraged to contribute to the protection of sea areas subject to the environmental impact of maritime traffic.
39. Consultations were also carried out with all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, through REMPEC Circular Letter No. 10/2021 and a letter from SPA/RAC respectively dated 9 and 11 March 2021. In this context, the draft PSSA Guidance Document was finalised taking into consideration the comments made by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

Strategic Outcome 3.2. Development of new action plans, programmes and measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines for the conservation of Coastal and Marine biodiversity and ecosystems.

40. COP 21 requested SPA/RAC to elaborate an ambitious and transformational post-2020 strategy for marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean, in line with the post-2020 global biodiversity framework of the CBD and other regional and global processes, and in consultation with relevant global and regional organizations, for consideration by the Contracting Parties at their COP 22 (Decision IG.24/6).
41. First, a strategic framework was presented and discussed during a 2-day online Stakeholder Consultation Workshop (videoconference, 8-9 April 2021), that was attended by 51 participants from national institutions, universities, UN and other intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and individual experts. Based on this first online consultation, a full draft was prepared and reviewed by

the AGEM members at their second meeting (videoconference, 3-4 May 2021), then by an online consultation workshop with the SPA/BD Focal Points (videoconference, 18 May 2021).

42. The final draft resulting from the input of these preparatory consultations is submitted to the 15th meeting of SPA/DB Focal Points for review and endorsement.

43. SPA/RAC has updated the following Action Plans following a participatory approach and through 2 national consultations:

- Action Plan for the conservation of habitats and species associated with seamounts, underwater caves and canyons, aphotic hard beds and chemo-synthetic phenomena in the Mediterranean Sea (Dark habitats Action plan)
- Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea

44. The draft updated Action Plans are presented as working documents to the 15th SPA/BD thematic Focal Points meeting in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 22 for adoption.

45. Following the request of the 21st COP (Decision IG.24/14), SPA/RAC has identified the first elements to elaborate the list of Reference of Pelagic Habitat Types in the Mediterranean Sea. The document is presented as working documents to the 15th SPA/BD thematic Focal Points meeting in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 22 for adoption.

46. As provided for in the Action Plan for the conservation of the coralligenous and other calcareous bio-concretions in the Mediterranean Sea, SPA/RAC launched the elaboration of the guidelines for the assessment of environmental impact on coralligenous/maërl assemblages. The guidelines available in English and French are presented as information document to the 15th SPA/BD thematic Focal Points.

47. As planned by the Regional Strategy for the conservation of Monk seal in the Mediterranean, under Goal Target 1, Goal Target 1.1. *A framework for the implementation of the Mediterranean Monk Seal Conservation Strategy is established by the Mediterranean Range States. The framework will include the establishment of a Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC).* Therefore the “Main elements of the Terms of Reference necessary for the establishment of this Committee including its main objectives, tasks, membership and modality of work is prepared by SPA/RAC.

48. Within the second phase of the MAVA Marine turtles project, (2020-2022) SPA/RAC supported the implementation of the monitoring nesting programmes in Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, and Tunisia. The programme aimed to monitor and assess beach quality, threats and pressures on the known nesting areas and to explore new areas. Within this second phase, national stranding sea turtle networks are reinforced in Tunisia, Lebanon and Algeria. Same activity is under discussion in Libya and Egypt.

49. Within the MAVA Species Project, SPA/RAC (as the Project’s Coordinator) and the Partners (ACCOBAMS, BirdLife Int., ICUN-Med, MEDASSET) are working on enhancing the knowledge on marine megafauna species (Marine Mammals, Sea Birds, Sea turtles and Elasmobranchs) in key areas of the Mediterranean. The Species Project is expected to continue until October 2022 and will provide a complementary data for the MAVA MED Bycatch Project based on the results of the 9 supported small projects.

50. SPA/RAC is coordinating (2018-2022) the implementation of Tunisia activities of the MAVA funded project “Mitigating dolphin depredation in Mediterranean fisheries – Joining efforts for strengthening cetacean conservation and sustainable fisheries”.

51. A project proposal has been developed in close collaboration with several Contracting Parties and the relevant partners in response to the call launched by the MONK SEAL ALLIANCE, the main objective is to implement the regional strategy for the Monk seal conservation in the Mediterranean.

52. SPA/RAC contributed to the updating of the ballast water management strategy for the Mediterranean Sea for 2022 – 2027. The updated strategy is presented as working documents to the 15th SPA/BD Focal Points for consultation in view to be submitted by REMPEC to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 22 for adoption.

53. The draft “Interpretation Manual” of the updated Reference List of marine benthic habitat types in the Mediterranean is elaborated. The draft Manuel is presented as information document to the 15th SPA/BD thematic Focal Points.

54. Within the framework of the MedKeyHabitats II project, SPA/RAC has elaborated two state of the art reports:

- Mediterranean coralligenous assemblages: a synthesis of present knowledge.
- Mediterranean marine caves: remarkable habitats in need of protection

55. A dedicated webinar will be organised (probably in July 2021) to disseminate these reports.

56. Within the MAVA MedBycatch project-phase 2 SPA/RAC is:

- providing support to for the harmonization and interconnection between the Post-2020 SAPBIO and the new GFCM Mediterranean and Black Sea Fishery and aquaculture strategy to ensure that both are tackling in a aligned way the mitigation of the incidental catches of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean.
- ensuring the dissemination and use of the standardized protocol “Monitoring incidental catch of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea - Methodology for data collection” elaborated by FAO/GFCM in close collaboration with SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, IUCN Med, BirdLife-Europe-and Central Asia and MEDASSET.

57. An Identification guide of the vulnerable species incidentally caught in the Mediterranean fisheries (Sharks, rays, seabirds, sea turtles, marine mammals, corals and sponges) as well as a pocket guide of the vulnerable species incidentally caught by the Morocco, Tunisian and Turkish fisheries, has been elaborated within the MAVA MedBycatch project-phase 1, and translated to several Mediterranean languages and disseminated by IUCN Med, SPA/RAC, FAO/GFCM, ACCOBAMS, BirdLife ECA and MEDASSET. A pocket guide of the vulnerable species incidentally caught by the Croatian, and Italian fisheries, has been elaborated within the MAVA MedBycatch project-phase II, and disseminated with WWF contribution. All guides are used within the national Bycatch data collection programmes of the MedBycatch project beneficiary countries.

58. SPA/RAC contributed to the elaboration of the online Mediterranean database portal on bycatch data collection by the FAO/GFCM within the MAVA MedBycatch project, phase 2.

59. SPA/RAC prepared the following reports by the end of 2019, as final outputs of the EU funded project Marine Litter MED (Phase 1), which are under review by the Marine litter CORMON:

- Regional operational strategy for monitoring IMAP Candidate Indicator 24, in direct cooperation with the “Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research” (ISPRA) and the “Ecole Pratiques des Hautes Etudes” (EPHE), and in consultation with the EU-funded INDICIT-II project: this strategy aims at providing to the CPs, detailed information on the necessary steps and methods needed for the development of the relevant national monitoring programme with the scope to collect standardized data on marine litter ingested by sea turtles and to assess how GES can be achieved.
- A report providing guidelines for the improvement of existing networks and development of a Mediterranean network for monitoring and assessment of IMAP Common Indicator (CI) 24 (i. e. marine turtles; ingestion and entanglement).

60. SPA/RAC will further contribute, in the 2nd phase of the Marine Litter MED project, launched in January 2021, to the development of IMAP Candidate Indicator 24 towards making it operational at country level;

61. As partner to the EU funded QUIETMED 2 project, SPA/RAC has drawn up the “manual for monitoring anthropogenic activities generating impulsive noise at sea”. This manual is intended for the competent authorities of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. It provides basic notions on the issue of underwater noise, its impact, legal framework and reporting methods at national and international levels (example: the register set up by ACCOBAMS).

62. Under the implementation of the phase 1 of the MAVA Marine turtles project, MEDASSET with the support of SPA/RAC produced a Pan-Mediterranean Stranding Protocol, for data collection regarding sea turtles of the Mediterranean, which is presented as information document.

Strategic Outcome 3.3. Strengthening national implementation of biodiversity conservation policies, strategies and legislation measures.

63. Within its assistance to Contracting Parties, SPA/RAC is supporting the elaboration of the NAPs:
- concerning species introduction and invasive species in Malta
 - Coralligenous assemblages in Lebanon and Montenegro
 - for the conservation of Marine turtles in Algeria (MAVA Marine Turtle project.)
 - for the conservation of marine vegetation in Cyprus, in 2020 (MAVA MedKeyHabitats II project)
64. Within the framework of the “Co-managed No-Take Zones/MPAs project” (July 2020-October 2022), SPA/RAC is supporting the relevant national authorities of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey in elaborating and adopting National Action Plans for the conservation of marine vegetation and coralligenous habitats.
65. SPA/RAC supported the implementation of a multitaxa bycatch data collection programme in Tunisia as well as the elaboration of a first national Bycatch report related to the collected data from March 2019 to March 2020, within the MAVA MedBycatch project-phase 1.
66. MAVA accepted to fund a second phase of the MedBycatch project (July 2020-October 2022) following a common proposal made by SPA/RAC, BirdLife ECA, GFCM, ACCOBAMS, IUCN Med, MEDASSET and WWF. Within the framework of this new phase of the MedBycatch project, SPA/RAC is leading the implementation of the activities in Tunisia and is coordinating with FAO/GFCM ACCOBAMS, IUCN Med, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, MEDASSET and WWF for the harmonization of the bycatch data collection programmes and bycatch data analysis as well as bycatch mitigation measures trials in Croatia, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. SPA/RAC started in November 2020 a new bycatch data collection programme.
67. The report “Marine Turtle Research and Conservation in Libya: A contribution to safeguarding Mediterranean Biodiversity” has been edited and published within the MAVA Marine turtles project as result of more than a decade of dedicated work in studying and conserving marine turtles in Libya.
68. SPA/RAC has also supported the production of the report on the activities conducted by Tethys research institute in 2020 in the Gulf of Ambracia, inner Ionian Sea archipelago, Paxoi and Antipaxoi islands and their surrounding waters.
69. Within the framework of the EU-funded IMAP-MPA project, SPA/RAC has initiated the process to support the development of a National MPA Network Strategy for the Mediterranean Egyptian coast since mid-2020 where the terms of reference (ToRs) to hire consultants for the development of the National Strategy have been prepared. Since then, SPA/RAC is awaiting the official authorizations from the competent authorities to launch a call for tenders for national consultants in view to start shortly after the elaboration of the strategy.
70. Under the same EU-funded IMAP-MPA project and following the endorsement by the SPA/BD national focal points of the ToRs to hire national consultants to prepare/draft complementary ecological and socio-economic studies in three sites, in Rachgoun Island in Algeria, Tyre Coast Nature Reserve in Lebanon, and Gulf of Sirte in Libya, the process for the selection of the national consultants has been successfully completed in the three countries, where selected candidates have been hired. These consultants have started their respective assignments since August/September 2020 and have completed the field work in the three countries by December 2020. Respective synthesis of ecological and socio-economic reports has been endorsed by the respective Ministries of Environment in the three countries and are being currently edited in view of their dissemination.

71. Within the framework of the “Co-managed No-Take Zones/MPAs project” (July 2020-October 2022), SPA/RAC is supporting the relevant national authorities of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey, through a participatory approach, in updating, developing and implementing management plans for Al Hoceima National Park (Morocco), Kuriat Islands future Marine and Coastal Protected Area (MCPA) (Tunisia), Foça Special Environment Protection Area (SEPA) (Turkey) and Rachgoun Island future MPA (Algeria), to reduce the impact of fishing activities on species and habitats, based on the results of the MAVA-funded MedKeyHabitats I and II projects. Supporting national and local authorities in implementing MPA management plans is involving several types of activities going from surveillance, monitoring, engaging local stakeholders, and establishing sustainable financing mechanisms to information, communication, awareness-raising, capacity-building, networking and exchange of experience, through twinning programmes, scientific events and stakeholder workshops.

72. SAP/RAC is collaborating with IUCN and WCPA in the elaboration of an assessment of institutional capacities for the establishment and management of marine protected areas in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia). The study was based on an individual situation analysis by country, that was circulated to various stakeholders for review and input. The final draft of the study is presently under review by SPA/RAC, IUCN and WCPA, in view of its dissemination. Besides situation analysis, the study will include operational and realistic recommendations for improving and sustaining institutional capacity for establishing, managing and expanding the MPA network in the region.

73. Within the framework of its assistance to Contracting Parties, SPA/RAC is supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina in the implementation of “marine habitats and protected area” activity within the Bosnia and Herzegovina Coastal Area Management Programme (CAMP B&H) implemented under the supervision of the UNEP/MAP Secretariat and the coordination of PAP/RAC.

74. The main objectives of the activity are to undertake, together with the relevant stakeholders:

- i) a first gap analysis between the available information and information needed for the identification and characterization of marine key habitats and their conservation and management in B&H territorial waters;
- ii) an overview of the marine biological diversity along the B&H coast, through a rapid assessment survey following the IMAP ecological objectives related to biodiversity (EO1) and non-indigenous species (EO2);
- iii) a preliminary mapping of the marine key habitats and flagship species (marine mammals, sea turtles and seabirds) distributional range, that will be useful for the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR 2023).

75. The activity will be planned during the first semester of 2022, given that CAMP B&H should come to an end by July 2022.

Strategic Outcome 3.4. Monitoring, inventory and assessment of biodiversity with focus on endangered and threatened species, nonindigenous species and key habitats.

76. Following the recommendations of the Integrated Meetings of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on IMAP Implementation (CORMONs) (December 2020), the informal thematic Online Working Groups (OWGs) was established, with the aim to support the work of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMON) on scale of assessment, and on proposal/update of assessment criteria/thresholds/ baseline values. These OWGs were operational for the Ecological Objectives (EOs)/Common Indicators (CI): EO1 CI 3,4 and 5 related to, respectively, marine turtles (meeting held on 29 March 2021); marine mammals (7 April 2021) and sea birds (16 April 2021) and EO2 CI6 related to non-indigenous species (20 April 2021).

77. The informal OWG have been involved in the review and updating of the documents discussed at the Integrated CORMONs Meetings (December 2020) and for the preparation of the documents on scales of assessment and assessment criteria/thresholds/baseline values for the respective thematic CORMONs of Spring 2021. Indeed, within the second phase of the IMAP implementation, SPA/RAC made progress in the development of regional analysis on monitoring and assessment elements related

to the CI 3, 4 and 5 (marine mammals and marine turtles) and CI6 on non-indigenous species. Assessment criteria/thresholds/baseline values were discussed first by the informal thematic OWG members and then by the CORMON Meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries (teleconference, 10-11 June 2021).

78. Elaboration of baseline values of Non-indigenous Species (NIS) is ongoing. National lists of NIS recorded in national waters were received from Contracting Parties and are under revision. Discussion and coordination with colleagues of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) was done to ensure synergy with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and follow a common approach and avoid duplication of reporting for the EU Mediterranean Contracting Parties. The national NIS inventories were reviewed and validated with the national experts designated by the Contracting Parties and then were reviewed by the CORMON meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries (teleconference, 10-11 June 2021).

79. Identification at country level of the capacities required to enable IMAP implementation and facilitate the provision of reliable and quality assured data for the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MEDQSR) is ongoing. Several bilateral coordination meetings have been organized with countries (i. e. Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia) during the period May-December 2020 to support the establishment of the national IMAP Committees and the identification of national needs.

80. Integration of the monitoring programmes in Tunisia and Libya is ongoing. Preliminary meetings were organised with national institutions (i. e. Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment, APAL and ANPE in Tunisia and EGA in Libya) to ensure a successful coordination and implementation of the respective national IMAP.

81. Gaps identified in the 2017 MED QSR were discussed to try to overcome them during this phase of IMAP implementation. Bilateral meeting with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat was organised (teleconference, 16 October 2020) to discuss the lessons learnt and difficulties faced during the implementation of the regional survey on marine mammals (ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, ASI) elaborated in June and July 2018 and identify synergies of cooperation for the publication of the 2023 MED QSR.

82. Within the framework of the GEF Adriatic project, SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC supported Albania and Montenegro to elaborate National Integrated Monitoring Programmes which considered interconnection between the several IMAP Ecological objectives. In the same framework, support was provided to Albania and Montenegro to develop national reports toward Good Environmental Status. An IMAP field survey has also been implemented on October 2020, in the framework of the GEF Adriatic project, by Albanian institutions with SPA/RAC, PAP/RAC and MEDPOL support in Patok Rodoni Bay in Albania. This survey allowed to provide IMAP data and GIS Maps in line with the SPA/RAC Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform (MBP) and the Info/RAC IMAP Info System platform as well as a report assessing the status of the study area and including recommendations to reach GES.

83. Under the Cooperation Agreement between the Italian Ministry of Ecological Transition and UNEP/MAP and in synergy with the GEF Adriatic Project, SPA/RAC in coordination with PAP/RAC implemented 3 Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) studies in Albania during the second semester of 2019: Assessment of the Ecological Status and MSP preliminary initial assessment in Vlora Marine Area ([Albanian- English](#)), Guidelines for MSP process in Albania ([Albanian- English](#)) and Anchoring buoys for small pleasure boats in Albania ([Albanian- English](#)). This assessment outcome was used for the installation of anchoring buoys by the Albanian authorities.

84. Following the adoption of the National Action Plan for the conservation of marine vegetation along the Mediterranean coast of Egypt, SPA/RAC is assisting Egypt in the implementation of the following activities for 2021 and beyond:

- Organise a three-day national training on taxonomy of seagrasses and algae.
- Identification through satellite images of seagrass meadows hotspots.
- The organisation of the first field mission, if possible, along the Mediterranean coast of Egypt or at selected representative areas to i) identify seagrass meadows and (ii) inventory other vegetal assemblage (algae, Cystoseira belts, etc.) on pilot site among the hotspots identified.

85. In May 2020, SPA/RAC contacted the concerned SPA/BD Focal Points (Cyprus, France, Italy, Morocco and Spain) to inform them about the process and deadlines for the 2020-2021 SPAMI ordinary periodic reviews and request them to collaborate for the setting up of Technical Advisory Commissions (TACs) for each of the SPAMIs to be evaluated, and tentative schedules for running the evaluations.

86. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic sanitary and travel restrictions that prevailed back starting from Autumn 2020, it was not possible to engage in SPAMI reviews as per the regular modus operandi, involving independent experts international travelling to the concerned countries, site visits and in-person meetings.

87. Consequently, an alternative proposal was made, consisting in running the SPAMI review processes, exceptionally, online: by e-mail, remote interviews and videoconferencing for all the eleven SPAMIs involved.

88. The SPAMI ordinary periodic reviews were made remotely, using the updated format for the periodic review of SPAMIs adopted by COP 21.

89. The online final evaluation meetings took place between mid-April and mid-May 2021. The outcomes of the reviews of the following 11 SPAMIs are brought to the attention of the 15th meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points meeting:

- Lara-Toxeftra Turtle Reserve (Cyprus);
- Bouches de Bonifacio Nature Reserve (France);
- Capo Caccia-Isola Piana Marine Protected Area (Italy);
- Miramare Marine Protected Area (Italy);
- Plemmirio Marine Protected Area (Italy);
- Punta Campanella Marine Protected Area (Italy);
- Tavolara-Punta Coda Cavallo Marine Protected Area (Italy);
- Torre Guaceto Marine Protected Area and Natural Reserve (Italy);
- Al-Hoceima National Park (Morocco);
- Archipelago of Cabrera National Park (Spain); and
- Maro-Cerro Gordo Cliffs (Spain).

90. The MAPAMED is a database developed and managed jointly by SPA/RAC and MedPAN. In October 2020, an MoU related to MAPAMED was signed between SPA/RAC and MedPAN, in order to ensure the continuous development, maintenance, operation and dissemination of the database.

91. The content of MAPAMED has been updated and submitted for validation by the SPA/BD Focal Points until December 2020. In April 2021, the updated version was released online and made available for downloading to the various users.

92. The database is the basis of the regular (every four years) Mediterranean MPA Status Reports.

93. The MAPAMED data is currently being analyzed and used, along with other data sources, to produce the 2020 Status Report on Mediterranean MPAs. This status report will be ready by October 2021 for dissemination at the 2020 MPA Forum and the Barcelona Convention COP 22.

94. Cooperation at sub-regional level to implement joint monitoring on NIS related to Fisheries is ongoing in the eastern Mediterranean. This activity is a continuation of the work undertaken in the EU funded Project EcAp MED II (2015-2019) on the joint sub-regional pilot monitoring plan on NIS (EcAp/IMAP Common Indicator 6) to support the implementation of monitoring programmes for seven agreed fish species of the sub-regional monitoring programme on NIS in collaboration with GFCM. A new sub-regional pilot could be designed for the Central Mediterranean region within the EU funded Project EcAp-MEDIII.

95. Following the Decision IG22/7 on IMAP, support by SPA/RAC for setting a baseline at national, sub-regional and regional levels for the entire list of NIS (not only related to Fisheries) is ongoing. Discussions on national lists of Non-indigenous Species (NIS) is very advanced. Indeed, national lists of NIS recorded in national waters were received from Contracting Parties and are under revision considering the results of similar assessment made in the framework of the Marine Strategy

Framework Directive (MSFD). Meetings with the members of the informal Online Working Group are already organised and will further continue to review and validate the results with the national experts designated by the Contracting Parties. The baseline of NIS will be submitted for endorsement to the EcAp Coordination Group Meeting (13 September 2021).

96. Within the framework of the MedKeyHabitats II project (July 2017- September 2020), SPA/RAC produced (i) detailed and updated maps of marine key habitats, (ii) maps of vulnerability to fishing activities, (iii) set up of monitoring systems of *Posidonia oceanica* and coralligenous populations, (iv) Socio-economic study and assessment of the impact of fishing on habitats and (v) zoning proposals and/or fishing activity management measures to reduce the impact on marine habitats in 11 pilot sites (Algeria : Habibas and Paloma islands, Cyprus : Cape Greco MPA , Malta : Żona fil-Baħar bejn Rdm Majjiesa u Għar Lapsi, Żona fil-Baħar fl-inħawi ta' Għar Lapsi u ta' Filfla, Żona fil-Baħar fl-inħawi tad-Dwejra (Għawdex), Żona fil-Baħar bejn Il-Ponta tal-Ħotba u Tal-Fessej (Għawdex), Żona fil-Baħar bejn il-Ponta ta' San Dimitri (Għawdex) u Il-Qaliet, Morocco : Al Hoceima National Park , Tunisia : Kuriat Islands and Turkey : Foça SEPA). Data provided to the relevant national authorities in 2020 should be used as a tool for sustainable coastal zone planning and management. The outputs will be available soon on the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform.

97. Based on the results of the MedKeyHabitats I and II projects, MAVA funded a new project “Co-managed No-Take Zones/MPAs project” (July 2020-October 2022) following a common proposal made by SPA/RAC, WWF, AGIR, HCMR, LIFE, MedPAN, Notre Grand Bleu and BlueSeeds. Within the framework of this new phase of the NTZ/MPA, SPA/RAC is supporting the relevant national authorities of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey, through a participatory approach, in updating, developing and implementing management plans for pilot MPAs, to reduce the impact of fishing activities on species and habitats.

Strategic Outcome 3.5. Technical assistance and capacity building at regional, sub-regional and national levels to strengthen policy implementation and compliance with biodiversity -related national legislation.

98. Within the framework of the MAVA MedBycatch project-phase II, SPA/RAC with project partners support, implemented an online training (3-5 May 2021) for Tunisian Fisheries and Environmental stakeholders and particularly Bycatch observers and Fishing guards related to the FAO/GFCM Mediterranean Bycatch data collection protocol, identification of vulnerable species (Sharks, rays, Cetaceans, Seabirds and Sea turtles) as well as fishing gears and bycatch mitigations measures.

99. Within the framework of the EU funded QuietMed 2 project, SPA/RAC organized in close collaboration with ACCOBAMS, the French-speaking workshop on impulsive noise at sea, in December 2020, having seen the participation of representatives of the competent and scientific authorities from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Lebanon.

100. The 5th Conference on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the South Mediterranean Countries (CSMC5), hosted by the National Centre for Marine Sciences of Lebanon (CNRS-L), was held online from 13 to 15 April 2021. This Conference was organised by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, in close collaboration with SPA/RAC and was financially supported by the Principality of Monaco.

101. Under the Cooperation Agreement between the Italian Ministry of Ecological Transition and UNEP/MAP, SPA/RAC in coordination with the Albanian National Agency of Protected Areas, organized a training for Albanian environmental stakeholders (Tirana, Albania, 13 December 2019), related to the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) and the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP).

102. Within the GEF Adriatic Project, SPA/RAC implemented an on-the-job field training (23 October 2020) related to IMAP monitoring in Albania and related to Biodiversity, hydrography and Pollution.

103. Within the GEF Adriatic Project SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC with Info/RAC support, organized a training for Montenegrin Stakeholders (4-5 February 2020, Podgorica) as well as an online training for

Albanian stakeholders (8 April 2021) related to the upload of IMAP data into the IMAP Info System platform.

104. SPA/RAC is leading Work-package 10 of the EU-funded project ODYSSEA (odysseaplatform.eu). WP10 aims to develop the capacity of North African partners (Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt) to carry out observing campaigns at sea, analyze collected data, develop numerical models and manage observatories. SPA/RAC intervenes in 2 components: i) the organization of capacity building events and ii) the support to young North African scientists to participate in summer schools organized within the framework of the ODYSSEA project. ODYSSEA Data and services can provide support for sensor or modelling systems collecting/producing diverse data parameters for: Biodiversity and Ecosystems (EO1), Non-indigenous species (EO2), Harvest of commercially exploited Fish and Shellfish (EO3), Eutrophication (EO5), Hydrography (EO7), Pollution (EO9), and Marine litter (EO10).

105. Within the framework of the phase 1 of EU-funded Marine Litter MED Project, SPA/RAC supported the organization of the national training session “Monitoring of the interaction between Sea turtles and Marine Litter in Algeria” held in December 2019.

106. National meetings were organized, in the framework of the EU funded Project IMAP-MPA, with the Southern Mediterranean countries to supported implementing monitoring programmes in selected sites, applying common and harmonized monitoring methodologies.

107. Training thematic modules are under development that will be used by Contracting Parties during the training events that will be coupled by the implementation of the IMAP. Best practices and lessons learnt will be shared across countries at sub-regional and regional levels and respective countries capacities enhanced.

108. Monitoring plans at site level will include more than one common indicator to maximize integrated monitoring and GES assessment to the extent possible. The countries will be supported to apply to the extent possible common assessment methodologies leading to harmonized to the extent possible common integrated GES assessment at national, sub regional and regional levels. Finally, countries will be trained on monitoring data recording and reporting. All these activities will lead to enhanced capacities of the southern Mediterranean countries for integrated national IMAP implementation.

109. Within the framework of the EU-funded IMAP-MPA Project and MTF core funds, SPA/RAC has prepared in close collaboration with UNEP/MAP Secretariat a concept note on the implementation of a regional capacity building programme for improving Mediterranean MPAs management and ensuring their sustainability. This region-wide capacity building programme will be delivered mainly through separate regional training courses on (i) MPA effective management and sustainable financing; and (ii) Socio-economic sustainability of MPAs. The terms of reference of the consultants needed for such assignment have been drafted and a call for consultancy launched in order to get the consultants onboard by the end of May 2021.

110. Within the EU-funded project ODYSSEA (odysseaplatform.eu) SPA/RAC capacity building supported with training material to manage observatories was undertaken as follows:

- SPA/RAC enabled young North African applicant scientists to annually participate to all ODYSSEA summer schools on oceanography since starting in 2018, including the 2nd one on Oceanography and Fisheries in the Mediterranean, from September 2 to 6, 2019, held on the Greek island of Alonissos, enabling to i) use the ODYSSEA project platform for retrieving, managing and processing oceanographic, environmental and fisheries data of the Mediterranean, ii) learn about the modern developments on marine instruments and sensors used in field sampling for operational oceanographic monitoring, iii) understand ecological models and their role in marine ecosystem management.
- ODYSSEA training workshops with SPA/RAC contribution were held for Observatory Managers on marine monitoring equipment: Glider (Alseamar) and sensor systems (Develogic). (May 2019, Rousset, France, July 2019, Hamburg, Germany)

- The 3rd ODYSSEA summer school (held online on 23-27 November 2020) on “Satellite Observations & Data Processing in Operational Oceanography”, focused on “the synergy between satellite observations of the sea surface and in situ measurements”. The online event aided to familiarize with existing satellite products, and how to use them together with in-situ data “in synergy”, to develop marine research approaches based on integrating data from multiple sources. It drew some 120 young professional trainees from 28 countries in five continents, especially from the Southern Mediterranean.
- In October 2020, SPA/RAC co-organized and participated to the workshop dedicated to Tunisian stakeholders (public institutions, academics and researchers in marine sciences, public and private operators in the field of maritime transport, fishing and aquaculture, etc...) in collaboration with the Tunisian Association for Sustainable Development and Conservation of Wildlife (ANDDCVS), during which the tools of the "MARINOMICA" oceanographic information platform, developed within the framework of the ODYSSEA PROJECT, were presented, along with other results based on satellite observations and modeling.
- Recently (22-24 February 2021), SPA/RAC provided Technical and logistical support to RAED (Egyptian Partner) for the organization of a training workshop on “Geospatial analytics and Remote Sensing for Climate Change Impact on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems” held both presentially and partially online.
- Further, SPA/RAC coordinated the preparation of the workshop dedicated to Moroccan end-users “Platform user validation & Operational Oceanography Workshop”, to be held on 2-3 June 2021.

111. A regional training session on the identification of marine key habitats (Common Indicators CI-1, EO1 and CI-2, EO1 of IMAP) and the use of Standard-Data entry Form (SDF) web application and Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform (MBP) is planned by SPA/RAC during the second half of 2021 when the manual of interpretation of marine habitats, the SDF web application and the new Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform would be ready. The regional training will be organized in synergy with the IMAP/MPA project.

Strategic Outcome 3.6. Enhanced cooperation at regional, sub- regional and national levels to protect and conserve biodiversity and ecosystems.

112. GFCM, ACCOBAMS and IUCN Med were contacted to find common activities on spatial-based protection and management measures for marine biodiversity, feasible to be done in synergy based on their programmed activities and commonalities with UNEP/MAP, including spatial management work through GFCM and Barcelona Convention SPAMIs. A first working teleconference was organized on June 25th, 2020, under UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit leadership. A draft document on common focus of work was shared by SPA/RAC to review and complement it. A revised version was further elaborated through an online meeting on February 2nd, 2021.

113. Fluent exchange took also place with GFCM and ACCOBAMS through the MedBycatch project phase 1 and 2 on potential combination of spatial and temporal measures to reduce bycatch of certain species,

114. The MoU between SPA/RAC and the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the period 2021-2022 has been signed by the two organisations after its review by the MAP Coordination Unit. In addition, another agreement between SPA/RAC and ACCOBAMS including the detailed joined work programme and the related budget has been established.

115. A new Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) was signed in October 2020 between SPA/RAC and MedPAN for the period 2020-2025. This MoC is a follow up to previous ones signed between both organizations since 2010.

116. Under this MoC, a specific MoU was signed concerning the modalities of joint management of the Database on Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (MAPAMED) between SPA/RAC and MedPAN. These draft memoranda were cleared by the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit and circulated to the SPA/BD Focal Points, before their signature by both organizations.

III. Climate change

Strategic Outcome 7.2. Development of new action plans, programmes and measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines.

117. Initial exchanges took place with MedECC through Plan Bleu to prepare in 2021 guidelines to enhance the marine biodiversity component of countries in their future updated NDCs, aiming to increase alignment and integration of marine biodiversity concerns and SDG 14 pursuit. They will aim to harmonize and coordinate with related tools and initiatives by the UNFCCC and the CBD to maximize synergies. Guidelines will take regard of the needs identified through the ongoing Post-2020 SAPBIO draft, once its text is advanced.