



UNEP



UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

15 may 2015
Original: English

Twelfth Meeting of Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas

Athens, Greece, 25-29 May 2015

Agenda item 10 : Marine and Coastal Protected Areas, including in the open seas and deep seas

10.2. Regional Working Programme for the Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Sea including the High Sea

10.2.1. Activities for the identification and creation of SPAMIs in the open seas, including the deep seas

Draft elements for a Common strategy among RAC/SPA, GFCM, ACCOBAMS and IUCN-Med, with collaboration of MedPAN

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The original version of this document was prepared by the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) with coordination with the relevant partners.

1. Background Information

The Mediterranean marine fauna and vegetation have evolved over millions of years and the Mediterranean has a high biodiversity with 7,5 % of the recorded global marine fauna and 18% of marine flora (out of them 28% endemic) and can be considered a marine species diversity hotspot. The continuous demand for nature and natural resources by human activities put the Mediterranean at risk. There is severe impact on the marine environment due to increasing population living at the coasts of the riparian countries. The threats are complex and the biodiversity loss calls for well coordinated responses (UNEP/MAP-RAC/SPA, 2003).

There are currently several organisations addressing the management and conservation of the Mediterranean. Among them, the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA), based in Tunis, works under the framework of UNEP-Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) for the Barcelona Convention and its protocols, that aims to protect the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment and mitigate pollution. RAC/SPA assists the Secretariat of the Barcelona Convention and its Parties in the implementation of their commitments under the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol), which came into force in 1999. It also assists them in the implementation of the 'Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region' (SAP BIO), adopted by the Contracting Parties in 2003.

The Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), under the UNEP-Convention on Migratory Species (UNEP/CMS), focuses on cetaceans' conservation. The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and the Black Seas (GFCM) under UN-FAO, prepares guidelines and recommendations for the fisheries sector management. The IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med), both IGO and NGO, is actively involved in conservation projects to increase marine protection for this specific region.

ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-Med and RAC/SPA are collaborating since many years ago and have established several cooperation agreements (MoUs, MoCs) in order to harmonize efforts and strengthen synergies in supporting conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources in the Mediterranean.

Regarding collaboration with GFCM, a MoC between UNEP/MAP and GFCM is currently in force, as a follow up of the previously existing MoC between RAC/SPA and GFCM, but this time embracing the whole UNEP/MAP system, including other RACs. RAC/SPA has been actively participating and contributing since last decade to the GFCM meetings (Scientific Advisory Committee, several sub-committees and Commission Sessions). Currently, discussions are ongoing on how to incorporate the ecosystem based approach in shared goals, including measuring indicators related to fisheries.

A MoU was established between ACCOBAMS and GFCM in May 2012; areas of cooperation include in particular assessment and mitigation of the impacts of human-cetaceans interactions. In this context, both organizations are jointly coordinating a project on mitigating interactions between endangered marine species and fishing activities in the Mediterranean. RAC/SPA is associated to the implementation of this project.

RAC/SPA is the Sub-regional -Coordinating Unit of ACCOBAMS for the Mediterranean region. A joint programme of work is established every triennium. A Memorandum of Cooperation was renewed between RAC/SPA and ACCOBAMS in March 2014, taking into account the priorities of the ACCOBAMS for the triennium 2014-2016 as well as the activities to be carried out by RAC/SPA within the framework of the Barcelona Convention's Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea.

In addition to a MOC between IUCN-Med and UNEP/MAP, IUCN-Med and RAC/SPA have a MOU on collaboration for the MedOpenSeas project and has collaborated on the open seas subject in several thematic reviews, including on canyons and sea mounts, on definition files for Mediterranean EBSAs elaborated with experts of UNEP/MAP and CBD, as well as on the UNEP/MAP priority conservation areas embracing the open seas, including deep seas. IUCN-Med is co-operating with RAC/SPA on its efforts to identify and make spatial mapping of areas fulfilling criteria to be candidate sites for inclusion on the list of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs). In addition, scientific and technical reports have been produced in close collaboration and presented in consultation processes and several fora.

Regarding the collaboration between ACCOBAMS and IUCN-Med, it should be noted that IUCN is a formal ACCOBAMS Partner since 2003 and is member of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee since 2002. It has been entrusted in 2013 to ensure the leadership and coordination of the Scientific Committee (in rotation with CIESM from one triennium to the next). Collaboration between ACCOBAMS and IUCN-Med includes also assessments of the conservation status for the cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea (Red List assessment).

ACCOBAMS, IUCN-Med and RAC/SPA are also collaborating for supporting the development of the “ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative” (monitoring of cetaceans abundance and distribution), as provided by an agreement established between the three organizations and the French MPA Agency in 2011.

RAC/SPA has also renewed a MoC with MedPAN in 2014 focused on MPAs and SAP BIO implementation issues. A proposal to the Barcelona Convention Parties for a Roadmap aimed at achieving a comprehensive, ecologically representative, effectively connected and efficiently managed network of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas has been developed by RAC/SPA in collaboration with MedPAN. They also manage jointly the Database of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (MAPAMED).

2. Scope of the Strategy

The threats on the marine environment are increasing and biodiversity loss is happening every day. The financial, human and logistical resources to prevent them are limited. The above mentioned bodies are following diverse mandates that in certain cases request them to act through different approaches on common fields of interest of their respective Parties or members accordingly.

Therefore there is an urgent need to start collaborating among all of the above Bodies in a much more structured way, allowing considering at the same time their different perspectives. It is needed to consider how to use their different expertise to pursue common tasks and make compatible and stronger eventual overlapping ones. Despite the active engagement there is no common strategy between the organizations mentioned above to act simultaneously.

This is a first attempt to create a joint strategic framework, with specific emphasis on addressing issues where the above institutions have common synergies.

The Joint Strategy, as a first step would focus on the conservation priority areas, where activities to promote spatial management and conservation are already being promoted by RAC/SPA in the framework of the EcAp/MED project (Alboran Sea, Sicily Channel/Tunisian Plateau and Adriatic Sea).

A final version of this draft Joint Strategy is expected to be jointly developed by end of September 2015, with a vision to develop it further, as a second step, into a wider common strategy document, aiming to achieve synergies and more coordinated regional sea governance, with the common aim of sustainable management of marine resources, to be finalised and agreed along 2016.

A final version of the first draft of the Joint Strategy is expected to be jointly developed by for September 2015, benefiting from the frame provided by the ongoing MedOpenSeas activities of the EcAp-MED project.

The current work of MedOpenSeas EcAp-MED project elaborates on the draft elements to be considered for a focusing on the open seas areas, including deep seas in the Mediterranean, and more specifically in the conservation priority areas where activities to promote spatial management and conservation are currently being promoted by RAC/SPA i.e.: Alboran Sea, Sicily Channel/Tunisian Plateau and Adriatic Sea.

The vision is to develop, based on this more focused first draft of the Joint Strategy, a broader Joint Strategy, by the end of 2016, building on existing cooperation arrangements, international agreements, goals relevant to the work of all organizations (i.e. SDGs), next to common challenges related to the sustainable management of marine resources, next to regional, sub-regional policy frameworks,

2.1. Joint Strategic Framework Goal

The goal pursued is to strengthen regional ocean governance, by increasing the synchronous collaboration between GFCM, ACCOBAMS, IUCN-Med and RAC/SPA in cooperation with MedPAN, with a specific attention, as a first concrete step, on how to address the issues of common interest in Alboran Sea, Adriatic Sea and the Sicily Channel

Furthermore, the joint strategy builds on and supports the implementation of existing cooperation agreements (MOUs, MOCs) among the different organisations and ensures complementarities in efforts for the Mediterranean live resources management and biodiversity conservation.

2.2. Elements Considered for the Strategy

RAC/SPA Program of Work (PoW), based on the UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy “Biodiversity and Ecosystems” strategic theme, takes into account the developed regional strategies aiming at the protection, preservation and sustainable management of marine and coastal areas of particular natural and cultural value and threatened and endangered species of flora and fauna. They include, among others, the ‘Regional Working Programme for the Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Sea including the High Sea’, and the emanating ‘Draft roadmap for a comprehensive coherent network of well managed MPAs to achieve Aichi target 11 in the Mediterranean’. In order to improve synergy and avoid overlapping and duplication of activities, they will be developed in close collaboration with competent regional and national organizations, including relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as NGOs and all other relevant stakeholders. A particular emphasis will be provided to the processes leading to the establishment of marine protected areas in the open seas by the concerned neighbouring countries, therefore allowing also the management of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ).

ACCOBAMS has many components in its program of work for 2014-2016 (ACCOBAMS-MOP5/2013/Res 5.2) that are very meaningful to collaborate with. The Agreement is planning to undertake surveys of abundance and distribution of cetaceans. This activity, together with assessing IUCN status of cetaceans in the Mediterranean, can be conducted jointly with RAC/SPA and/or IUCN-Med. ACCOBAMS is also intending to assess cetacean by-catch and to propose mitigation measures in cooperation with GFCM, through a project jointly developed and recently launched. RAC/SPA, IUCN-Med, GFCM and MedPAN may collaborate with ACCOBAMS on an update of a list of areas containing critical habitats of cetaceans in the Mediterranean and on an update of existing Guidelines for the

assessment of MPAs including Cetacean Critical Habitats in order to adapt them to the ACCOBAMS context using best practices and propose recommendations for the management of Cetacean Critical Habitats in high seas, notably for the priority areas of the MedOpenSeas project.

Moreover, the monitoring of underwater noise is an important issue to be developed in collaboration with other relevant organizations. The Secretariat of ACCOBAMS, in accordance with the Secretariat of the UNEP/MAP, launched a study to develop a basin-wide strategy for underwater noise monitoring in the Mediterranean. The technical guidance was developed by members of the Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS/CMS Noise Working Group (JNWG). This document outlines the importance of assessing and monitoring underwater noise in the Mediterranean Sea, and discusses the issues related to the choice of indicators currently proposed for the implementation of Descriptor 11 of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), with a view to propose adaptations to the Mediterranean case, whenever possible. The proposed monitoring strategy represents a further important progress towards an effective and widely agreed regulation of underwater noise at a regional scale.

A possible cooperation with ACCOBAMS on cetacean by-catch also highlights the importance and logical next step to establish a joint strategy between the organisations.

During the 37th Session of the GFCM (Split, Croatia, 13-14 May 2013) the Parties adopted the “GFCM Parties Resolution GFCM37/2013/1 on area based management of fisheries, including through the establishment of Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRAs) in the GFCM convention area and coordination with the UNEP-MAP initiatives on the establishment of SPAMIs decision”. This resolution will allow for better institutional coordination as well as clear GFCM institutional framing at GFCM Secretariat level regarding synergies with UNEP/MAP on marine areas conservation and management.

IUCN is assisting the world communities to find pragmatic solutions to the most pressing challenges concerning environment and development. IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world and gathers governments, non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies, private companies and local communities in order to, together, develop and implement policies, laws and best practices.

As part of IUCN global programme, the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation has been created "To influence, encourage and assist Mediterranean societies to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable".

The Mediterranean region needs cooperative mechanisms to address the crisis of biodiversity loss, to demonstrate how nature can offer solutions to different challenges, and how to improve governance for biodiversity conservation. Such a strategic approach between the regional partners will benefit the Mediterranean and its conservation efforts.

For the first draft of the Strategy, a further analysis will be undertaken on the short and medium term programmes and activities of the above institutions. These will be jointly analysed and discussed in order to search for commonalities and future synergies favouring the conservation of pelagic and deep seas ecosystems in those areas.

In addition, a position paper, containing a breakdown of each organization's position on the topics being discussed, informing on current facts on the matter, regarding each organizations, as well as proposals for common resolutions on the issues related to the establishment and management of joint SPAMIs in open seas will be jointly elaborated by the involved organizations (ACCOBAMS, IUCN, GFCM, UNEP/MAP and MedPan) and will be sent to their respective Focal Points, governing bodies with the purpose of promoting synergy at the national levels between the different concerned Ministries.

3. Elements for Strategic Framework (DRAFT 0)

Strategic objective	Operational objective (Several areas of focus will be developed for each one)
1 Governance	
	<p>1.1 Participate to the best possible extent to respective meetings of relevant Scientific, Steering and Advisory Committees</p> <p>1.2 Hold multilateral consultations among them when matters of common interest arise</p> <p>1.3 Provide coordination and synergy for smooth implementation in the Mediterranean of the activities provided for in respective periodical mandates</p> <p>1.4 Present sub-regional common priorities and their budgetary implications, drafted in mutual collaboration, for consideration by respective Meeting of the Parties</p> <p>1.5 Invite as observer/s the concerned party/ies to meetings where policy matters will be discussed</p> <p>1.6 Encourage exchange of information and coordination on relevant matters among the respective focal points in each common Party</p> <p>1.7 Collaborate on legal, institutional and policy related matters of common interest</p>
2 Biodiversity conservation and natural resources management	
	<p>2.1 Monitor marine biodiversity and natural resources in line with principles, indicators under the Ecosystem Approach</p> <p>2.2 Pursue multilateral meetings and ad-hoc experts workshops and exchange to address priority areas of interest linked to specific species groups , areas or subregions</p> <p>2.3 Mitigate impact of fisheries and aquaculture on marine habitats and species</p> <p>2.4 Promote ecosystem approach and sustainable use of natural resources in the Mediterranean Region</p> <p>2.5 Identify key areas regarding biodiversity and/or marine live resources in need of appropriate spatial management measures and</p>

	pursue synergic ways to plan/institutionally assist their management
3 Capacity building	
	3.1 Promote capacity building initiatives for the Mediterranean
	3.2 Undertake to the limit of technical and financial possibilities joint training activities
	3.3 Invite the other party/ies to send observers and when possible trainees to training activities of their interest
4 Scientific information exchange and outreach	
	4.1 Contribute with scientific documents to the respective meetings of relevant Scientific, Steering and Advisory Committees
	4.2 Exchange relevant information that will further the objectives and implementation of respective mandates and collaborate for appropriate dissemination of such information
	4.3 encourage exchange of information at national level of relevant experts, laboratories, institutions able to enhance the scientific basis for the implementation of mandates and activities of the other party/ies in that country.
5 Funding	
	5.1 Look for financial resources for synergic agreed and developed projects oriented to fulfil common priorities, tailored to decisions of respective parties
	5.2 Exchange information on funding opportunities to the other party/ies for activities beneficial for synergic actions
	5.3 Any activity implying financial obligations on common activities shall be reflected in common appropriate financial/administrative documentation following respective rules and procedures