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**Agenda Item 7: Implementation of the ‘Regional Working Programme for the Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Sea including the High Sea’ supported by the ‘Roadmap for a Comprehensive Coherent Network of Well-Managed MPAs to Achieve Aichi Target 11 in the Mediterranean’**

**Draft Terms of reference for the Ad hoc advisory group of experts for MPAs in the Mediterranean**

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## **Draft Terms of reference for the Ad hoc advisory group of experts for MPAs in the Mediterranean**

### **I. The Mediterranean Ad hoc Advisory Group of Experts for MPAs (AGEM): Rationale and objectives**

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

2. In the Mediterranean, MPAs are extremely diverse in terms of nature and typologies and are often closely linked to the legislative frameworks and to national and international regulations. Most of them were established as individual sites and not within a network approach, which ensures an adequate level of representativeness of the Mediterranean marine environment. This resulted in several gaps in the coverage of ecosystems and species in need of protection. The recent inventory of all existing Mediterranean MPAs carried out, in 2016, by MedPAN and SPA/RAC indicated that the 1,231 MPAs and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures, OECMs (including national MPAs, marine Natura 2000 sites, Pelagos Sanctuary, IMO Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas, UNESCO Biosphere reserves and World heritage sites, Ramsar sites and GFCM Fisheries Restricted Areas, FRAs - excluding the area of gear restrictions beyond 1000 m) account only for 7.14 per cent of the total surface area of the Mediterranean Sea. For the majority of sites, little is known on whether management measures are implemented, and if they are, whether these measures are effective to reach the site's conservation targets.

3. It is therefore clear that, although it plays a significant role in safeguarding hotspots of Mediterranean biodiversity and in preserving many natural sites from the adverse impacts of human activities, the Mediterranean network of MPAs needs a stronger development and implementation effort. Furthermore, most of the Mediterranean States are committed under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to develop a comprehensive, well-managed, effective and equitable, ecologically representative and well-connected system of MPAs to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Target 11. Reaching this target requires to increase the total surface area covered by MPAs through extending the boundaries of existing MPAs, creating new coastal MPAs and new MPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), integrating other areas of usage restrictions which could contribute to biodiversity conservation (e.g. fisheries reserves). It requires also to improve the management of MPAs and their governance systems.

4. In other terms, the big challenge for the national authorities in charge of MPA planning and management as well as for the relevant international organisations, in the

coming years, will be to improve the Mediterranean MPA network in relation to coverage, representativeness, connectivity and management effectiveness. A further challenge is to achieve more integration of MPAs within their social and economic context, in particular by promoting their role in contributing to marine spatial planning and delivering ecosystem services in terms of fisheries, tourism, resilience to climate change, etc.

5. Addressing these challenges implies that MPA governance be based on the best available knowledge, taking advantage of the expertise and experience of a wide range of disciplines. This could be reached through establishing an ad hoc advisory group of experts that, based on the regular assessment of the status of the Mediterranean MPAs, provides countries and international organisations with advice on how to strengthen the Mediterranean network of MPAs and to orient it towards a proper and timely achievement of the Aichi targets, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 on oceans, seas and marine resources, Good Environmental Status of the Mediterranean Sea targets stated by the Barcelona Convention Ecosystem Approach process, and/or other objectives to be reached at regional level.

6. The initiative to create such an “ad hoc advisory group of experts” is based on the need to have a multidisciplinary think tank that can provide advice and timely orientations on MPAs planning and management.

7. A first added value of the AGEM will be to the “Regional Working Programme for the Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean including the High Sea” mainly through the monitoring of the progress in the implementation of the “Roadmap for a Comprehensive Coherent Network of Well-Managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to Achieve Aichi Target 11 in the Mediterranean” adopted by the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Decision IG.22/13).

8. It will also act as a think tank to identify the best approaches for achieving the four objectives of the roadmap (as adopted by COP 19):

- Objective 1: Strengthen networks of protected areas at national and Mediterranean levels, including in the high seas and in ABNJ, as a contribution to the relevant globally agreed goals and targets.
- Objective 2: Improve the Mediterranean MPA network through effective and equitable management.
- Objective 3: Promote the sharing of environmental and socio-economic benefits of Mediterranean MPAs, and the MPAs integration into the broader context of sustainable use of the marine environment and the implementation of the ecosystem and marine spatial planning approaches.
- Objective 4: Ensure the stability of the Mediterranean MPA network by enhancing their financial sustainability.

9. Furthermore, the AGEM will contribute in building a better science-policy interface in relation to the area-based approaches for the conservation of the Mediterranean marine biodiversity. Indeed, most of the challenges faced in the implementation of the Regional Working Programme for the Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean require solid scientific advice to support decision-making. Through its scientific opinions and recommendations, the AGEM will support the works of the Focal Points for SPAs and facilitate bridging the gap between science, management and decision-making in MPA governance.

## **II. The Mediterranean ad hoc advisory group of experts for MPAs (AGEM): Draft Terms of Reference**

### **A) Mission and objectives**

1. The primary mission of the ad hoc advisory group of experts is to provide scientific and technical guidance to improve the Mediterranean network of MPAs in terms of coverage, representativity, connectivity and management effectiveness. To this end, it will serve as a think tank addressing a wide range of topics of relevance to MPA planning and management in the Mediterranean context.

### **B) Tasks**

2. The ad hoc group of experts will act as an advisory body whose works are oriented to deliver scientific and technical advice regarding the future orientations in MPA planning and governance. It should also keep close watch on the Mediterranean network of MPAs with the view of providing assessments and ensuring the timely identification of gaps and hindrances that might impede the proper development of the network. It should deliver sound outputs, clearly drafted and timely issued, based on the state of the art in terms of knowledge. The main tasks it will undertake are:

- Regularly review the state of Mediterranean MPAs (including all spatial-based protection and management measures) and undertake by the end of 2019 an assessment of the status of the Mediterranean network of MPAs with the view of evaluating the progress made by the Mediterranean countries towards achieving the Aichi Target 11.
- Assess the representativity of the Mediterranean MPA network, in particular through a gap analysis to identify the ecosystems and other components of marine biodiversity that are under-represented and make recommendations to overcome the identified gaps.
- Monitor the progress made in implementing the Roadmap for a Comprehensive Coherent Network of Well-Managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to Achieve

Aichi Target 11 in the Mediterranean.

- Assess the financial needs and gaps for MPAs and propose innovative funding approaches, including through a proper marketing of the services and benefits generated by MPAs.
- Identify potential MPA sites including within the Mediterranean Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs).
- Assess the effectiveness of the governance and management systems existing in the Mediterranean and where possible identify the governance barriers that impede the adequate functioning of institutions and other bodies in charge of MPA management.
- Evaluate the current monitoring systems of MPAs and propose improvements and modifications as needed.
- Provide scientific information in response to requests from MPA managers and relevant national authorities addressed to it through SPA/RAC.
- Develop policy support tools addressing the cut-off points of existing approaches and allowing to overcome the sticking points in relation to the sustainability of the MPA governance systems in the region.
- Develop harmonized technical tools including guidelines, standards and indicators for:
  - the spatial planning of MPAs that ensures ecological connectivity and geographical balance across the region, both within and outside national jurisdiction;
  - the management of networks of MPAs, and MPAs extending over multiple jurisdictions and/or into ABNJ;
  - the MPA management evaluation, specifically adapted to the Mediterranean context;
  - the conciliation between the conservation objectives and the requirements for the local economic and social development;
  - the setting of cross-sectorial policies and mechanisms for integrating the MPA national strategies and policies with other human activity sectors, in particular fisheries and tourism;
  - the development of systems enabling civil society to engage effectively in MPA management;
  - the equitable sharing of social and economic benefits deriving from MPAs, including poverty alleviation and improving the standard of living of local populations, while ensuring conservation and sustainable use of resources.

### **C) Membership/Composition**

3. To be effective the ad hoc group of experts should include a wide range of expertise and ensure a fair and geographically balanced representation of the Mediterranean sub-regions. It will be made of 18 members, including 14 specialists of the following disciplines (2 members/discipline):

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

4. The 14 disciplinary specialist members of the ad hoc group of experts will be designated for a period of 2 years by the Meeting of the Focal Points for SPAs. To this end, at each of the ordinary meetings of the Focal Points for SPAs, SPA/RAC will propose a list of at least 28 qualified experts and their CVs (4 experts for each of the 7 disciplines referred to in paragraph 3). The Focal Points for SPAs may also propose experts and their CVs.

5. Furthermore, each of the 4 following scientific bodies will be invited to designate one representative to be member of the ad hoc advisory group of experts:

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

6. Contribution to the ad hoc group of experts should be on voluntary basis and the group members will contribute in their personal capacity and not as representatives of their countries or organisations. They will not be paid for their contributions and inputs to the works of the group of experts.

### **D) Working languages**

7. The working languages of the ad hoc advisory group of experts will be English and French.

### **E) Functioning modalities**

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

9. During the first 3 years following its establishment, and thanks to a financial support from the EU<sup>1</sup>, the group of experts will meet physically at least once every year and will exchange electronically on a frequent and regular basis using appropriate means. After the first three-year period, the modalities for the meetings of the group of experts will be set taking into account the tasks to be undertaken, the availability of financial resources and the lessons learned from the first three-year period. The works of the ad hoc group will be mainly through remote meetings and webinars with the support of SPA/RAC.

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> The “MedMPA Network” project is financially supported by the EU, managed by UNEP/MAP and co-executed by SPA/RAC, WWF-MedPO and MedPAN. The setting up of such ad hoc advisory group on MPAs is part of SPA/RAC activities within this project.