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**Agenda item 4 : Progress report on activities carried out by SPA/RAC since the twelfth meeting of Focal Points for SPAs**

**Progress Report of the activities of the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC)**

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## Introduction

During their 19th Ordinary Meeting, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols adopted several decisions in relation with SPA/RAC scope of action. Those are mainly related to: **(i)** UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021 (and particularly the Core Theme 2: Biodiversity and Ecosystems), **(ii)** Programme of Work and Budget 2016-2017, **(iii)** Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (and particularly its ecological objectives related to biodiversity and non-indigenous species), **(iv)** Updated Action Plans concerning “Cetaceans”, “Coralligenous and Other Calcareous Bio-concretions”, and “Species Introductions and Invasive Species”; Mandate for update of the “Action Plan on Marine and Coastal Birds” and revision of the “Reference List of Marine and Coastal Habitat Types in the Mediterranean”, **(v)** Roadmap for a Comprehensive Coherent Network of Well-Managed MPAs to Achieve Aichi Target 11 in the Mediterranean, and **(vi)** List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI List).

The UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy (MTS) 2016-2021 includes the following Strategic Themes:

1. Overarching theme: Governance
2. Core theme 1: Land and Sea-based Pollution
3. Core theme 2: Biodiversity and Ecosystems
4. Core theme 3: Land and Sea Interactions and Processes
5. Cross-cutting theme 1: Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)
6. Cross-cutting theme 2: Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)
7. Cross-cutting theme 3: Climate Change Adaptation

During the reporting period, (from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2017) SPA/RAC has acted mainly on the above mentioned Core Theme 2, principal area covered by the SPA/BD Protocol; but also actions related to Overarching theme Governance, Core theme 3, and Cross-cutting themes 1 and 3, were addressed as reported below.

SPA/RAC specific programme of work for the biennial period 2016-2017 contributed to the following Strategic Outcomes for Core theme 2 Biodiversity and Ecosystems: Strategic Outcome 3.1: Strengthening regional implementation of the obligations under the Barcelona Convention, and its relevant Protocols and other instruments, 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, Strategic Outcome 3.3: Strengthening national implementation of biodiversity conservation policies, strategies and legislation measures, Strategic Outcome 3.4: Monitoring, inventory and assessment of biodiversity with focus on endangered and threatened species, non-indigenous species and key 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, Strategic Outcome 3.6: Enhanced cooperation at regional, sub-regional and national levels to protect and conserve biodiversity and ecosystems, and Strategic Outcome 3.7: Identifying and tackling with new and emerging issues, as appropriate.

SPA/RAC programme of work for the biennium also contributed to the following Strategic Outcomes for the Overarching theme Governance: Strategic Outcome 1.3: Strengthened participation, engagement, synergies and complementarities among global and regional institutions, Strategic Outcome 1.4: Knowledge and understanding of the state of the Mediterranean Sea and coast enhanced through mandated assessments for informed policy-making, Strategic Outcome 1.5: MAP knowledge and MAP information system enhanced and accessible for policy-making, increased awareness and understanding, and Strategic Outcome 1.6: Raised awareness and outreach.

SPA/RAC programme of work for the period 2016-2017 assisted also the Strategic Outcome 4.2: Development of new action plans, programmes of measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines, on the Core Theme 3 Land and Sea Interaction and Processes.

Regarding Cross-Cutting Theme 1 Integrated Coastal Zone Management, SPA/RAC programme of work for the biennial period also aided the Strategic Outcome 5.1: Strengthening regional implementation of the obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, and of programmes of measures in existing Regional Strategies and Action Plans.

The Cross-Cutting Theme 3 Climate Change also got SPA/RAC support through its biennial programme of work on the Strategic outcome 7.2: Development of new action plans, programmes and measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines.

This report portrays the studies, technical reports and outputs produced on the technical and scientific work by SPA/RAC during the reporting period. From them, the meeting is expected to examine and review the technical documents that would be forwarded to the MAP Focal Points meeting for endorsement and eventually to the 20th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties for adoption, in particular the following:

**(i)** Draft updated Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine and Coastal Bird Species listed in Annex II of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean, **(ii)** Draft Updated Reference List of Marine Habitat Types for the Selection of Sites to be included in the National Inventories of Natural Sites of Conservation Interest in the Mediterranean, **(iii)** Draft Report on the evaluation of the 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', **(iv)** Draft Terms of reference for the Ad hoc advisory group of experts for MPAs in the Mediterranean, **(v)** Draft Proposals of areas for inclusion in the List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI List), **(vi)** Report of the Ordinary Periodic Review of three SPAMIs, **(vii)** Updated online version of the Format for the Review of SPAMIs, **(viii)** Draft updated Format for the periodic review of SPAMIs, **(ix)** Draft report on the evaluation of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) implementation related to biodiversity (EO1) and NIS (EO2), **(x)** Proposals for amendment of Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol, and finally **(xi)** Draft programme of work of SPA/RAC for the biennium 2018-2019.

The report follows the sequence of Themes, Strategic Outcomes and Key Outputs as they are defined in the Mid-Term Strategy. Whenever there were indicators and targets already defined for those outputs, their current status of achievement have been included too. It has to be noted that several indicators show not target achievement to date, but they can be reached at the end of the biennium.

## **Overarching theme: Governance**

### **Strategic Outcome 1.3: Strengthened participation, engagement, synergies and complementarities among global and regional institutions**

**Key Output 1.3.1:** *Regional cooperation activities promoting dialogue and active engagement of global and regional organizations and partners, including on SAP BIO, Marine Litter, SCP, ICZM, MSP and Climate Change (e.g. regional conference, donor meetings)*

#### **1. Promote NGOs to become MAP partners and facilitate their contribution to MAP objectives, including annual round table discussions back to back with other meetings**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Share of external financial resources mobilized to co-finance MTF for the implementation of the Mid-Term Strategy; (Baseline: 0; Target: At least 20% of total MTF budget; Achieved and further ongoing along 2017)

SPA/RAC maintains along 2016-17 rounds of meetings with the donor MAVA Foundation, aimed to achieve support to the development of projects to pursue MAP objectives and on their funding interest scope, including the conservation of turtles, habitat cartography and impact mitigation of incidental catch on vulnerable species.

SPA/RAC is collaborating with MedPOL to implement a number of activities foreseen in the Marine Litter MED Project to support the implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean (Decision IIG 21/13) as well as the IMAP.

SPA/RAC received a request from a **Tunisian** NGO “Notre Grand Bleu” for being partner to the action plan for the conservation of marine turtles (see Annex 1).

#### **2. Organize meetings with MAP Partner Agencies and Regional Seas to review progress and maximize synergies in the implementation of respective cooperation agreements**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of joint activities with partners during meetings organized on 2016-17 (Baseline: 0; Target: 3 meetings; Achieved: 3)

SPA/RAC contributed to elaborate and review CBD Secretariat documents related to biodiversity issues of interest for the Mediterranean, through direct inputs as well as through the CBD Expert Meetings on EBSAs and on Aichi target 11, later addressed to the CBD COP 13 (Cancun, Mexico. December 2016).

**Key Output 1.3.2:** *Participation in relevant existing or new international initiatives and dialogue (e.g. ABNJ, MPAs, Offshore, Sustainable Development) to highlight the Mediterranean regional specificities and increase synergies*

#### **1. Promote Barcelona Convention, its Protocols and MSSD**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of events featuring MAP system organized on 2016-17 (Baseline: 0; Target for all RACs: 48 meetings; Achieved by SPA/RAC: 3)

SPA/RAC animated together with MEDPAN a side event at that CBD COP 13 (Cancun, Mexico. December 2016) and participated in another at "The Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organisations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets" (Seoul, Republic of Korea. September 2016)

It also contributed through featuring the Mediterranean activities for a MPA network in the Region to the Kick Off Workshop of the European Union initiative: “Transatlantic MPA Network: Towards a Transatlantic Partnership of Marine Protected Areas” (Brussels, November 2016)

**Key Output 1.3.3:** *MSSD implementation set in motion through actions on visibility, capacity building, and the preparation of guidelines to assist countries adapt the Strategy to their national contexts*

### 1. Test a pilot on peer review mechanism proposed by MCS D

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Final output under Plan Bleu responsibility

SPA/RAC contributed, together with other RACs, to the elaboration of the guideline document for the Parties: “*Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean: State of Play and Strategic Directions*”, under the coordination of Plan Bleu; to be published very soon as Plan Bleu Paper No 17.

**Strategic Outcome 1.4:** Knowledge and understanding of the state of the Mediterranean Sea and coast enhanced through mandated assessments for informed policy-making.

**Key Output 1.4.3:** *Implementation of IMAP (the EcAp-based integrated monitoring and assessment programme) coordinated, including GES common indicators fact sheets, and supported by a data information centre to be integrated into Info/MAP platform*

### 1. Support country assessment, national monitoring programmes (including joint monitoring), fact sheets for Biodiversity and NIS

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of Biodiversity and NIS CORMON meetings organized by 2017 (Baseline: 1; Target: 2 CORMON meetings; Achieved: 1)

SPA/RAC organised the meeting of the Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) regarding the cluster biodiversity and fisheries, on 28<sup>th</sup> February and 01<sup>st</sup> March 2017 in Madrid, **Spain**. Guidance factsheets related to the adopted biodiversity and fisheries common indicators, developed respectively by SPA/RAC and the GFCM, were discussed in order to better assist countries in updating their monitoring programmes in line with the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP).

In this perspective, Common indicator assessment factsheets and draft0 of the 2017 Quality Status Report (QSR2017) were also discussed, including the steps, timelines as well as the structure. The related documents are presented respectively in UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.430/3, UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.430/4, UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.430/5 and UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.430/Inf.4.

SPA/RAC is supporting the seven concerned south Mediterranean Contracting Parties by the ECAP-MEDII project (**Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia**) on the update/development of their national monitoring programme in line with the IMAP recommendations. Drafts of the elaborated national monitoring programmes will be discussed and validated during national workshops involving the relevant institutions and potential experts in monitoring and assessment of Biodiversity and non-indigenous species (NIS) common indicators.

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

**Key Output 1.5.1.:** *Info/MAP platform and platform for the implementation of IMAP fully operative and further developed, connected to MAP components' information systems and other relevant regional knowledge*

### 1. Development of the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform (MBP)

**a) Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of Info/MAP services provided and of data set/data services made available through Info/MAP platform; Final output under Info/MAP responsibility)

Within the development of the Mediterranean clearing-house mechanism on marine and coastal biodiversity, SPA/RAC has launched within the framework of the Medkeyhabitats project the establishment of a Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) for its georeferenced data which will be called the

Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform (MBP). The Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform will provide 3 main services:

- Discovery: search and access information
- View: Display spatial datasets on the interactive map (WebGIS features);
- Download: public users (or authorised users depending on Data Policy rules applicable to the specific dataset) will be able to select and download maps of their interest.

On the Catalogue, authorised users, will be granted editing privileges, in order to “declare” their “sources of information” using standardised metadata. The datasets will be published and then accessible through the GeoViewer. Access, view and download of data will be subjected to Data Policy rules, but a minimum set of information (i.e. the metadata), describing at least the source of data will be always available, as well as the contact point.

The MBP can fit into any information system that provides a final architecture as a distributed system like InfoMAP. In that final architecture, only the GeoViewer, the Catalogue, and the GeoDatabase for regional level reference datasets will reside centrally at the SPA/RAC Node managed by SPA/RAC, while data sources (spatial datasets and data services) and distributed catalogues will remain at the provider's' side (i.e. MAP Components, CPs information systems and other partners or data providers like EMODNET).

SPA/RAC has also launched the redesign of the (Standard Data-Entry Form) SDF web application in order to be integrated with the MBP. A firm was hired to enhance the data-model and the make the application user friendly.

### **Strategic Outcome 1.6: Raised awareness and outreach.**

#### **Key Output 1.6.1: The UNEP/MAP communication strategy updated and implemented.**

##### **1. Update SPA/RAC website and graphic charter, and enhance biodiversity related databases' systems**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of hits of SPA/RAC website (Baseline: 14,000 visits (2015); Target: 15,000 hits/year; Achieved: 0)

The first call of tender to develop the SPA/RAC website was unsuccessful. The terms of reference are being updated and finalised to launch a new call of tender as soon as possible. In the meantime, the current website is regularly updated (14,980 visits in 2016).

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Percentage of SPA/RAC documents, publications and other products in line with the new graphic charter (Baseline: 0; Target: 100%; Achieved: 0)

The work on the graphic charter has been suspended until further instructions / guidelines from UN Environment/MAP concerning visual identity of the whole system, after “UNEP” has been refurbished into “UN Environment” and its graphic identity has undergone changes.

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of biodiversity experts and stakeholders subscribed in the database (Baseline: 0; Target: 2000; Achieved: +4000)

A new contract is being negotiated with the enterprise that developed the database, mainly to update the contact's information via a mailing campaign, and to integrate an experts' directory on the new SPA/RAC website.

##### **2. Raise awareness, inform and educate by producing cartoons, infographics etc. on biodiversity in the Mediterranean**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of cartoons produced by 2017 (Baseline: 2; Target: 4 (2 more); Achieved: 1)

A cartoon on the Ecosystem Approach has been elaborated, screened and disseminated during two significant events:

- The Science Policy Interface workshop related to Biodiversity cluster organised within the MPA Forum (28 November 2016, Tangier, **Morocco**).
- The meeting of the Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Biodiversity and Fisheries (28 February and 1 March 2017, Madrid, **Spain**).

A new one will be produced by 2017.

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of infographics produced by 2017 (Baseline: 1; Target: 3 (2 more); Achieved: 1)

An infographic on the ecological role of Posidonia meadows has been produced (not yet disseminated). A new one will be produced.

## **Core theme 2: Biodiversity and Ecosystems**

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

**Key Output 3.1.1:** *A comprehensive coherent network of well managed MPAs, including SPAMIs, to achieve Aichi Target 11 in the Mediterranean set up and implemented.*

### **1. Set up an ad hoc group of experts on MPA issues under the SPA/BD Protocol**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** The Mediterranean MPA Ad hoc group of experts meets regularly, at least once per year (Baseline: 0; Target: 1; Achieved: Meeting planned for end of 2017)

SPA/RAC started, during the 2016 MPA Forum (Tangier, **Morocco**, 28 November-1 December), a reflection on the design and rationale behind the creation of the Ad hoc group of experts on Mediterranean MPAs, in consultation with relevant regional organisations. The rationale and terms of reference of such advisory group are presented for discussion and approval by the present meeting.

### **2. Maintain, update and improve the database on MPAs in the Mediterranean (MAPAMED), including relevant regional inventories and systems of sites of conservation interest; and elaborate the 2016 MPA Status Report**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of Geo-referenced data confirmed by Contracting Parties and updated on the database by 2016 (Baseline: 0; Target: 22; Achieved: 16)

Geo-referenced data on the extension of MPAs as well as qualitative data on their management have been collected by SPA/RAC and MedPAN and led to the updating of the MAPAMED dataset as of 2016. Data has been analysed and a leaflet of the main findings was produced and disseminated during the 2016 MPA Forum, as well as a poster showing MPA distribution in the Mediterranean.

### **3. Organize the 2016 Mediterranean MPA Forum (second edition) in collaboration with MedPAN and other relevant partners**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of participants to the 2016 MPA Forum (Baseline: 200 ; Target: 300; Achieved: 300)

The 2016 Forum of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (Tangier, **Morocco**, 28 November-1 December), organised by MedPAN, SPA/RAC and the 'Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte Contre la Désertification', gathered around 300 key players involved in the marine environment (representatives of national environmental agencies, fishing and tourism, land managers, scientists, non-governmental and civil society organisations, local economic actors and Mediterranean and international institutions) coming from 33 countries.

The participants to the Forum shared their experiences, discussed and developed a joint work programme to improve, by 2020, the protection of the Mediterranean Sea. This Forum was an opportunity for a mid-term assessment of the implementation of the 2012 MPA Roadmap and led to propose new recommendations to tackle the challenges faced by MPAs, especially those related to climate change, with an integrated and long term vision (the Tangier Declaration).

**Key Output 3.1.2:** *Most relevant area-based management measures are identified and implementation supported in cooperation with relevant global and regional organisations through global and regional tools (SPAMIs, FRAs, PSSAs, etc.), including for the conservation of ABNJ, taking into consideration information on Mediterranean EBSAs*

**1. Support the Parties for working together in the planning of management measures tailored to different sub regions to improve status of environment in ABNJ or where the limits of jurisdiction have not yet been defined, having regard of available legal frameworks and tools, including maritime traffic, fisheries regulations, SPAs and multilateral management of SPAMIs**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Collection in documents of data on pressures and impacts in ABNJ or where limits of jurisdictions have not yet been defined (Baseline: 0; Target: 2 sub-regions; Achieved: 3 sub-regions)

Output documents produced through the MedOpenSeas project were edited and published on line for 3 subregions, West Mediterranean (Alboran Sea), Adriatic (Adriatic Sea) and Central Mediterranean (Sicily Channel), on their ecology, key vulnerable species (cartilaginous, turtles, marine birds, cetaceans) marine resources and related pressures and impacts in those areas, including fisheries overviews for each of them.

A GIS compilation being developed with data and metadata following INSPIRA standard and including features, biota, marine areas and pressures embracing ABNJ, notably increased during the biennium reaching so far over 160 georeferenced layers, keeps. They are hosted on SPA/RAC databases and ready for inclusion in online map portals.

A synthesis document on legal points to be aware of for the protection of BBNJ was prepared: *WG.431 / Inf.9 Note on the legal framework for the protection of marine biological diversity in areas of the Mediterranean Sea beyond national jurisdictions or for which the limits of sovereignty or jurisdiction have not yet been defined (ABNJ).*

A supporting document on existing management options for large marine areas, undertaken through a global review, was produced: *WG.431/Inf.10 Best practices and case studies related to the management of large marine transboundary areas: Options for the preparation of joint proposals for inclusion in the SPAMI List in accordance with Article 9 of the SPA/BD Protocol.*

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Parties' exchanges/tailored capacity meetings facilitated for different sub-regions with EBSAs information available (Baseline: 0; Target: 2 sub-regions; Achieved: 1 capacity meeting facilitated for 4 sub-regions)

The facilitation of a Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Capacity meeting with CBD for the Mediterranean marine spatial planning and management was undertaken (CBD Secretariat proposal pipelined for spring 2018)

**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

**Key Output 3.2.1:** *Regional Action Plans for the conservation of Mediterranean endangered and threatened species and key habitats, on species introductions as well as the Mediterranean Strategy and Action Plan on Ships' Ballast Water Management are updated to achieve GES*

## 1. Implement the Regional Strategy for the conservation of the Monk Seal in the Mediterranean and the updated Cetaceans Action Plan

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of implemented activities planned within the Monk Seal Regional Strategy and updated Cetacean Action Plan 2016-2017 implementation calendars (Baseline: 0; Target: 3 activities; Achieved: 3)

SPA/RAC is reviewing a proposal “Towards place-based conservation initiatives of Mediterranean monk seals in the Ionian Sea” submitted by Tethys research Institute and supported by the SPA focal point of **Greece**.

A new Memorandum of Understanding between the Permanent Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) and the SPA/RAC was signed in March 2017 including an update joint work programme.

SPA/RAC supported the implementation of the following studies:

Satellite telemetry applied to fin whales in the Mediterranean Sea” carried out by the “Tethys Research Institute” around Lampedusa Island (**Italy**). A photo –identification survey on the bottlenose population in the Bay of Bizerte (North of **Tunisia**) achieved by the Tunisian Association for Taxonomy Tunisian Dolphin Project: population size and habitat use for bottlenose and common dolphins along the North of **Tunisia**, which is ongoing by “L’Association Nationale du Développement Durable et de la Conservation de la Vie Sauvage”.

SPA/RAC is supporting in collaboration with the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS the functioning of the Mediterranean database on cetaceans stranding (MEDACES).

Within the implementation of the ACCOBAMS-GFCM Project on mitigating interaction between endangered marine species and fishing activities, SPA/RAC, as partner to this project, is coordinating the achievement of the two following pilot actions:

- Purse seine small pelagic fisheries in Kelibia
- Bottom and surface longline fisheries in the Gulf of Gabès

Within the framework of the second component of the mentioned Project, SPA/RAC has collaborated, with ACCOBAMS Secretariat and the General Direction of Fisheries and Aquaculture (**Tunisia**) to the organisation of training workshop on « Whale Watching-Pescatourism » Tunis, 13-14 March 2017.

Following the finalization of the National Action Plan for the conservation of marine Mammals in **Egypt** in 2012, SPA/RAC has organized with the collaboration of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) and ACCOBAMS Secretariat , the First Cetaceans field Survey in the Egyptian Mediterranean Waters. The survey was conducted during April 2016, in the area of Damietta (Part of the Nile Delta area).

## 2. Exchange experience and Information between managed and monitored marine turtles nesting sites

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of managed and monitored marine turtles nesting sites contributing to the experience and information exchange training (Baseline: 0; Target: 2 sites; Achieved: 2)

SPA/RAC is supporting the following Activities:

- Monitoring and conservation of sea turtles and their habitat in **Albania**, 2016: main actions has been focused on bycatch monitoring, data collection, capacity building, Education and Awareness raising.
- The monitoring of Marine turtles nesting (Kuriat island, **Tunisia**) Improving the conditions and

the functioning of the rescue centre in Monastir (**Tunisia**).

- Standardise methodologies to estimate demographic parameters for marine turtles population dynamics analysis, such as population modelling

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of defined Protocols on standardized methodologies to estimate demographic parameters for marine turtles population (Baseline: 0; Target: 1 Protocol; Achieved: 1)

Guidelines to standardize methodologies to estimate demographic parameters for marine turtles populations in the Mediterranean is elaborated and is presented as information document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.431/Inf.5

### **3. Update the Birds Action Plan to include all 25 species of Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of bird species included in the Action Plan for the conservation of Birds (Baseline: 15; Target 25 species; Achieved: 25)

The Draft updated Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine and Coastal Bird Species Listed in Annex II of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean, which includes an update on the 25 species is presented as working document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.431/5.

### **4. Update the directory of national, regional and international experts in Cartilaginous Fishes conservation**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of new entries/updates carried out on the directory of national, regional and international experts in cartilaginous fishes conservation (Baseline: 0; Target: 20 new entries/updates; Achieved: 0)

The experts' database being developed will get all information updated through a mailing campaign in order to clarify the expertise domain of existing experts. Also, the new SPA/RAC website should allow registration of new experts. All this is being prepared via a contract with the enterprise who developed the database system and a call of tender for the new SPA/RAC website.

### **5. Promote existing research proposals developed under the Regional cartilaginous Action Plan to funding agencies; develop similar proposals for the Levantine basin**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of research proposals developed under the Cartilaginous Fishes Action Plan (Baseline: 0; Target: 1 research proposal; Achieved: 0)

SPA/RAC is assisting **Turkey** for the elaboration of the national Action Plan for the conservation of cartilaginous fishes. A national workshop was held on 10 of March 2017 in Istanbul to set up the outlines of the NAP.

### **6. Update the information layer on distribution of meadows/coralligenous and other priority habitats (MedGIS)**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of priority habitats for which geo-referenced information layers has been updated (Baseline: 0; Target: 2 priority habitats; Achieved: 2)

All the map produced within the framework of Medkeyhabitats project concerning the distribution of marine key habitats and in particular Posidonia meadows and coralligenous assemblages were uploaded to the MBP and can be found at <http://data.medchm.net>.

A questionnaire will be sent to the Contracting Parties to gather maps of the distribution of meadows/coralligenous and other priority habitats to be uploaded to the MBP and connection with other online services providing mapping information of marine key habitats in the Mediterranean will be made.

## **7. Complete and revise the directory of specialists and laboratories, institutions and organisations working on marine key habitats as well as on Non Indigenous Species in the Mediterranean region**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of new entries/updates carried out on the directory of specialists and organizations working on marine key habitats and non-indigenous species in the Mediterranean region (Baseline: 0; Target: 60 new entries/updates; Achieved: 0)

The experts' database being developed will get all information updated through a mailing campaign in order to clarify the expertise domain of existing experts. Also, the new SPA/RAC website should allow registration of new experts. All this is being prepared via a contract with the enterprise who developed the database system and a call of tender for the new SPA/RAC website.

## **8. Revise the Reference List of Marine and Coastal Habitat types for the Mediterranean region, taking into account dark assemblages**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of Reference Lists of Marine and Coastal Habitat Types for the Mediterranean region that takes into account dark assemblages (Baseline: 0; Target: 1 reference list; Achieved: 1)

As decided by the last Barcelona Contracting Parties meeting (Athens, 2016), SPA/RAC has launched the updating of Reference List of Marine and Coastal Habitat types for the Mediterranean region, taking into account dark assemblages. The updating should also be in line with the EcAp Process. The draft reference list was reviewed during an ad hoc meeting held in Blanes, Spain, on 22-23 February 2017 in presence of a number of Mediterranean experts and regional partner organizations (GFCM, IUCN-Med, OCEANA and ETC/BD). The Reference List of Marine and Coastal Habitat types for the Mediterranean region is presented in the document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.430/6

## **9. Maintain and further develop the Marine Mediterranean Invasive Alien Species Database (MAMIAS)**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of regional databases on marine invasive alien species online and fully operational (Baseline: 0; Target: 1 regional database; Achieved: 1)

The MAMIAS database was updated till September 2016 and another updating is currently underway. SPA/RAC is working to enable to report Invasive Alien Species occurrences in the Mediterranean allowing citizens to contribute to early detections of new invaders.

Since October 2016, MAMIAS became a data partner to EASIN (European Alien Species Information Network) is a platform developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre which enables easy access to data on Alien Species reported in Europe.

**Key Output 3.2.2:** *Guidelines and other tools for the conservation of endangered and threatened Mediterranean coastal and marine species, key habitats, for non-indigenous species control and prevention as well as the management of marine and coastal protected areas developed/updated and disseminated.*

## **1. Elaborate Guidelines for long-term monitoring programmes for marine turtles nesting beaches and standardize monitoring methods for nesting beaches, feeding and wintering areas**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of Guidelines for long-term monitoring programme for marine turtles nesting beaches and standardized monitoring methods for nesting beaches, feeding and wintering areas elaborated (Baseline: 0; Target: 1 Guidelines; Achieved: 1)

Guidelines for the long term Monitoring programmes for marine turtles nesting beaches and standardize monitoring methods for nesting beaches, feeding and wintering areas are elaborated and presented as information document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.431/Inf.4

## 2. Elaborate guidelines for the inventorying and monitoring of dark assemblages

a) **Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of Guidelines for the inventorying and monitoring of dark assemblages elaborated (Baseline: 0; Target: 1 Guidelines; Achieved: 1)

SPA/RAC collaborated with Oceana (partner of the "Dark Habitats" action plan) to prepare a draft document describing the basic guidelines for inventorying and monitoring Mediterranean "Dark Habitats" (i.e. caves & deep-sea assemblages), as a follow up to the Action Plan for the conservation of habitats and species associated with seamounts, underwater caves and canyons, aphotic hard beds and chemosynthetic phenomena in the Mediterranean Sea. The aim of the guidelines is to make a census of the main methods used for inventorying and monitoring dark assemblages in the Mediterranean, and to better understand their benefits, limitations and conditions of use.

The draft document was presented and discussed with relevant Mediterranean experts during the Ad-hoc meeting to update the Reference List of Marine Habitat Types for the Selection of Sites to be included in the National Inventories of Natural Sites of Conservation Interest in the Mediterranean and distributed to a number "dark habitat" specialists who have provided comments and suggestions. The draft guidelines are presented in the document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 431/Inf.12.

## 3. Disseminate technical tools for gap analysis and MPA system planning and facilitate exchange of experiences and best practices

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of recipients (Mediterranean MPA responsible agencies and individual planners) having received the set of technical tools for gap analysis and MPA system planning (Baseline: 0; Target: 50 recipients; Achieved: 0) - Activity underway

SPA/RAC is elaborating a short practical guide on gap analysis and MPA system planning adapted to the Mediterranean context to be used by Mediterranean countries' planners and decision-makers and other stakeholders involved in MPA planning processes, based on the most recent available technical tools, literature and best practices developed at international level. This guide will be ready by July 2017 and will be made available in English and French.

**Key Output 3.2.3:** *Coordination support for Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) applied in selected areas at a pilot level linking coastal and open sea areas subject to major pressures. To this end the information on EBSA areas could be used*

### 1. Apply MSP and ICZM within a selected area, including EBSAs, aiming to identify most relevant area-based management options at a pilot level

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** The MSP pilot elaboration in cooperation with relevant RACs and Partners is presented to Parties representatives (Baseline: 0; Target: 1; Achieved: Final output under PAP/RAC responsibility)

Support was offered along the biennium to MSP Conceptual Framework tailored meetings of PAP/RAC providing technical and legal framework arguments backing the convenience of including the open sea areas in the MSP conceptual framework

A compilation was elaborated in an information document for the Parties on MSP related to the SPA/BD Protocol and open sea areas: *WG.431/Inf.8 Marine Spatial Planning and the protection of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) in the Mediterranean Sea*

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of MSP pilot projects taking into account coastal and open sea areas subject to major pressures (Baseline: 0; Target: 1; Achieved: 1)

GEF Funding achieved for UNEP/MAP Adriatic MSP pilot project embracing the EBSA "South Adriatic-Ionian Strait", benefiting Montenegro and Albania and implemented by several RACs

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

**Key Output 3.3.1:** *NAPs for the conservation of Mediterranean endangered and threatened species and key habitats and on species introductions and invasive species developed/updated.*

**1. Support countries to update/develop new SAP BIO NAPs on biodiversity including for the conservation of Mediterranean threatened and endangered species and key habitats in line with EcAp, Aichi Targets and the Nagoya Protocol, incorporating SCP Regional Action Plan priority actions and climate change adaptation priority fields of action**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of countries supported to update/develop new SAP BIO NAPs on biodiversity including for the conservation of Mediterranean threatened and endangered species and key habitats, and NIS, in line with EcAp and Aichi Targets (Baseline: 0; Target: 4 countries, including 3 countries concerning NIS; Achieved: 4)

SPA/RAC is Assisting **Egypt** to develop the following National Action Plans :

- NAP for the conservation of marine vegetation and species introduction and invasive species
- NAP for conservation of marine turtles.
- NAP concerning species introduction and invasive species.

Support was also offered to **Cyprus, Lebanon** and **Israel** for the elaboration of their NAPs concerning species introduction and invasive species

Following a request from its Turkish Focal Point, SPA/RAC supported TUDAV for the organisation of workshop on the Lionfish in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea (Antalya, **Turkey**, 9 - 10 February 2017). Problems and new solutions were discussed.

**2. Support the Contracting Parties and partners in producing and publishing relevant scientific documentation contributing to update knowledge and enhance conservation actions taken towards the conservation of species listed in Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of Contracting Parties and partners assisted to produce relevant scientific documents supporting the elaboration of NAPs on conservation of listed species (Baseline: 0; Target: 2 Contracting Parties/Partners; Achieved: 1)

SPA/RAC is supporting the Survey and monitoring of the common dolphin population around the islands of Corfu, Paxos/Antipaxos, Lefkada, Ithaki/Kephallonia (**Greece**). This activity was implemented under The Ionian Dolphin project.

**Key Output 3.3.2:** *National measures developed and implemented to strengthen the protection and the management of relevant marine and coastal sites, especially those containing threatened habitats and species (including deep-sea habitats).*

**1. Undertake ecological characterization of two marine sites suitable to be declared as MPAs in Lebanon**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of marine areas ecologically characterized in Lebanon (Baseline: 0; Target: 2; Achieved: 8)

An ecological characterisation of three ecologically important sites in **Lebanon**: Batroun, Medfoun and Byblos, has been carried out from 28 September to 7 October 2016, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment of Lebanon, the National Council for Scientific Research of Beirut, the University of Alicante (Spain) and IUCN-ROWA. The report of the ecological characterisation is under finalisation. Further to the above, the Deep Sea Lebanon Project "Towards Deep-Sea Conservation in Lebanon" is based on a request by the Ministry of Environment of Lebanon, in line with its Marine Protected Areas strategy. This project relies on scientific data collected, compiled and analyzed by project partners OCEANA, IUCN and SPA/RAC, representatives from the Ministry of Environment with the support of CNRS-L (scientific partner), GFCM and ACCOBAMS, and funded by MAVA Foundation.

The Deep-Sea **Lebanon** Project has concluded a one-month deep-sea expedition (October 2016) embracing five canyon systems, in previously unstudied areas in Lebanon, reaching a record survey depth of 1050,9 m. In total, more than 200 species were observed there, including new records for the Mediterranean Sea that had only previously been found in the Atlantic Ocean and in Polar Regions. Throughout 2017, all the data gathered will be further studied and analysed in collaboration with national and international experts in order to design science-based MPA proposals and ecosystem-based measures that will be discussed in several workshops to reach consensus for final MPAs and management plans.

It is expected that future MPA designations will result in substantial benefits for national authorities as well as economic gains for the local communities. Additionally, given the lack of scientific information on deep-sea, the project will also considerably contribute to improve the description and information available on Mediterranean deep-sea habitats, as part of the process to implement the Dark Habitats Action Plan.

## **2. Undertake ecological and/or socio - economic/stakeholders assessments as needed and elaborate management plans for three new MPAs in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of Management plans for future/newly created MPAs (Baseline: 0; Target: 3; Achieved: 0) - Activity underway and expected to completed during 2018.

The process for the elaboration of a management plan for the Jbel Moussa future MPA in Morocco has started in November 2016. An inception meeting bringing together the main stakeholders at local level was organised for the first week of April 2017 in Tangier. The elaboration of management plans for two MPAs in **Egypt** (Sallum MPA) and **Tunisia** (North-Eastern part of the Kerkennah Islands) are planned to start during the second semester of 2017.

During the second half of 2015, SPA/RAC completed the 5-year MedMPAnet project (Regional Project for the Development of a Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MPAs) Network through the boosting of MPAs Creation and Management), implemented in the framework of the MedPartnership programme and financially supported by EC, AECID and FFEM. This project aimed mainly at assisting Mediterranean riparian countries in the setting up of an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the region. It has been addressed through the identification and characterisation of marine sites suitable to become MPAs, and also through demonstration projects for MPA creation and planning, including stakeholders' participation and financial sustainability mechanisms.

The project allowed the identification, listing and ecological characterisation of 24 priority areas of conservation interest in Croatia, Lebanon, Morocco and Montenegro. It provided support for the inception, ecological and socioeconomic characterization, zoning and management planning of 4 new MPAs in **Albania (Porto Palermo), Algeria (Réghaia), Morocco (Cap des Trois Fourches) and Tunisia (Kuriat Islands)**. Business plans have been elaborated for the 3 demonstrations in Albania, Algeria and Morocco. Furthermore, technical assistance and capacity building activities to improve MPA management have been provided through regional and national training workshops, on-the-job training, small-granted projects, and technical tools and guidelines.

The MedMPAnet project's efforts led to the declaration or the launching of declaration processes of 7 MPAs (totalling a surface of 98,411 ha of marine waters), which are: **Porto Palermo (Albania), Réghaia (Algeria), Ras Chekaa, and Naqoura (Lebanon), Ain Al-Ghazala & Bomba Gulf (Libya), Cap des Trois Fourches (Morocco) and Kuriat Islands (Tunisia)**.

The results and achievements of the project were presented during a final workshop that was held in Tunis, Tunisia, on 17-18 November 2015. Best practices and lessons learnt were also discussed during a dedicated roundtable and compiled into a final publication ([http://www.rac-spa.org/sites/default/files/doc\\_medmpanet/final\\_docs\\_regional/71\\_medmpanet\\_project\\_lessons\\_learned.pdf](http://www.rac-spa.org/sites/default/files/doc_medmpanet/final_docs_regional/71_medmpanet_project_lessons_learned.pdf)).

**Key Output 3.3.3:** *Biodiversity and ecosystem protection actions integrated in CAMPs, other ICZM Protocol implementation projects and Strategic Environment Impact Assessments.*

### **1. Strengthen the SPAMI-related activity in the Var Department**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of SPAMIs endowed with an approach of territorial management and good environmental practices (Baseline: 0; Target: 2 SPAMIs; Achieved: 1 SPAMI)

The “Archipel d’excellence” initiative set up under the CAMP **France** Var programme is undertaking an action aimed to reduce light pollution on the Porquerolles Island (part of the Port-Cros National Park and SPAMI since 2001).

### **2. Capitalize and valorize the results of the SPAMI study for the Var Department**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of recipients having received the standard methodology on territorial management and good environmental practices (Baseline: 0; Target: 30 recipients; Achieved: 0) A communication material highlighting the achievements of the “Archipel d’Excellence” initiative in the Var Department SPAMIs will be produced by SPA/RAC in collaboration with the PAP/RAC and the CAMP **France** project team. This material aims at promoting this initiative among other MPAs and SPAMIs and is anticipated for September 2017.

### **3. Conserve minor species (CAMP Italy)**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of monitoring programmes for marine endangered species prepared and implemented within CAMP Italy (Baseline: 0; Target: 2 monitoring programmes; Achieved: 0)

Relevant documents on the monitoring of endangered species and guidelines were transmitted to the Management Unit of CAMP **Italy**.

**Strategic Outcome 3.4:** Monitoring, inventory and assessment of biodiversity with focus on endangered and threatened species, non-indigenous species and key habitats.

**Key Output 3.4.1:** *Monitoring programmes for key species and habitats as well as invasive species, as provided for in the IMAP are developed and implemented, including on the effectiveness of marine and coastal protected areas, and on climate change impacts.*

### **4. Run in 2017 the ordinary periodic review of three SPAMIs: Banc des Kabyles Marine Reserve (Algeria), Habibas Islands (Algeria), and Marine Protected Area of Portofino (Italy). Make use of the review in order to make an in-depth assessment of their management effectiveness**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of SPAMIs having undergone the process of SPAMI ordinary review in 2017 (Baseline: 0; Target: 3 SPAMIs; Achieved: 3 SPAMIs)

SPA/RAC collaborated early 2017 with the relevant authorities in Algeria and Italy in order to carry out the ordinary periodic review of the Banc des Kabyles Nature Reserve and Habibas Islands (**Algeria**), and the Portofino Marine Protected Area (**Italy**).

### **5. Finalise the SPAMI review format and adapt it to transboundary and/or ABNJ SPAMIs**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of SPAMI review formats adapted to transboundary and/or ABNJ SPAMIs available online (Baseline: 0 ; Target: 1 review format; Achieved: 1 format)

The review was carried out using the procedure adopted by the Contracting Parties in 2008, and allowed the testing and improvement of a new procedure, that is proposed for discussion and endorsement by the present meeting. While finalised, an electronic version of the new procedure will be made available and will allow the monitoring of SPAMIs evolution across their repetitive ordinary reviews.

## 6. Assess the progress made in implementing the Roadmap on MPAs by the Contracting Parties

a) **Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Proportion of activities of the Regional Working Programme on MCPAs, aiming at achieving Aichi Target 11, initiated by Mediterranean countries (Baseline: Unsurveyed ; Target: 70%; Achieved: ongoing)

SPA/RAC is preparing a draft report on the evaluation of the implementation of the 2009 Regional working programme on MCPAs supported by the 2016 Roadmap on MPAs, in view of its presentation to the present meeting, and eventually to the 2017 ordinary MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 20 for information.

SPA/RAC, GFCM and ACCOBAMS, considering the close relationship among three events they planned to organize in 2015 on the conservation of areas of special interest in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, agreed to combine these events in a joint meeting to which their respective focal points and/or experts would be invited to share their experience and available knowledge of relevance for the conservation of marine areas. The joint meeting was held in Gammarth (**Tunisia**) from 9 to 12 June 2015 and it was made of:

- the SPA/RAC Conference on SPAMIs
- the GFCM SAC's Working Group on Marine Protected Areas
- the ACCOBAMS Workshop on the effectiveness of MPAs containing critical habitats for cetaceans

**Key Output 3.4.3:** *EcAp common indicators on biodiversity and non-indigenous species monitored through IMAP in MPAs and SPAMIs, and relevant data sets established.*

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** not defined

In the framework of the EcAp-MEDII project, SPA/RAC is mandated to support the southern Mediterranean Contracting Parties (**Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia**) in the update/development of their national monitoring programme. Based on the IMAP recommendations, the Contracting Parties while updating their national monitoring programmes need to include at least the monitoring of the reference list species and habitats with at least two monitoring areas, one in a low pressure area (e.g. marine protected area/ Specially Protected Area of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI) and one in a high pressure area from human activity.

**Key Output 3.4.4:** *Inventory of vulnerable and fragile coastal and marine ecosystems and assessment of sensitivity and adaptive capacities of coastal and marine ecosystems to changes in sea conditions as well as of the role of services they provide developed.*

### 1. Implementation of Medkeyhabitats project funded by MAVA foundation

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** not defined

In the framework of the MedKeyHabitats project, SPA/RAC continued the implementation of the activities planned for the objective 1 concerning the inventory and the mapping of the marine key habitats in the concerned countries:

**Morocco :** The mapping of biological communities was carried out in September 2015 in the entire marine area included in Belyounech and Punta Ciress to the depths of 40 m. This mapping was carried out essentially using video recordings taken by a remote-controlled vehicle (ROV) and using a camera towed in case of strong currents. A meeting was held in May 2016 with Le Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte Contre la Désertification (HCEFLCD) to present the results of the mapping activity, the installation of a monitoring network and to discuss the follow-up to be given for the protection of the natural heritage of the Jbel Moussa SIBE. SPA/RAC has proposed the development of a management plan for the site as part of the MedMPAnet II project.

**Algeria :** After the selection of the pilot site, the main mapping mission was carried out in June 2016 in Rachgoun island. In order to meet the main objectives of the mission (mapping, set up a monitoring system for Posidonia and coralligenous assemblages), the choice of study stations was made in order to

obtain a good representation of marine habitats. Particular attention was paid to the Posidonia meadows (0-18 m depth) and the coralligenous assemblages (29-31 m). A validation meeting took place on 15 November 2016 with the Ministry in charge of the Environment, le Commissariat Nationale du littoral and representatives of the local administration (Ain Témouchent).

**Tunisia :** For the mapping of the pilot site of Cap Negro-Cap Serrat, three surveys were required to cover the study area (15-29 October 2015, 14-22 November 2015, 16-21 May 2016) for the performance of a bathymetric survey and side scan sonar data acquisition. The field mission for biological surveys, the ground truth and the setting up of monitoring networks was carried out between 11 and 20 December 2015. A validation meeting for this phase took place in October 2016 with the Ministry in charge of the environment and l'Agence de Protection et d'Aménagement du Littoral.

**Montenegro :** After the mission for geophysical surveys (July 23-28, 2015), the field mission for biological surveys, the ground truth and the setting up of monitoring networks was carried out between September 30 and October 9, 2015. The geophysical and biological surveys carried out in this study allowed a detailed description of the geomorphological characteristics as well as the main habitats and species at the two pilot sites (Ratac and Platamuni).

For more details and to download the report of the above mentioned activities, please visit the website of SPA/RAC at <http://rac-spa.org/publications#enmedkey>. The maps produced were uploaded to the MBP and can be found at <http://data.medchm.net>. Also SDF were compiled for each site and will be uploaded to the new SDF web Application.

Communication and Media: The project unit has set up a specific page on the project, its activities and its results on the SPA/RAC website. Project-specific pages have been created on social networks (facebook, google + and youtube). Almost all mapping activities in the countries were filmed and documented. A library of photos of more than 1,200 high-quality photos has been set up.

Closing workshop : In order to present the results of the project in particular the results of Objective 1 on mapping of key marine habitat and benefit from the presence of more than 300 participants, a closing workshop was held during 2016 Forum of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean from 28 November to 1 December 2016 in Tangier, **Morocco**. The Project supported the national focal point as well as scientists from the countries involved in the project and the partners who carried out the mapping work. For this occasion, SPA/RAC prepared a kit with (i) a brochure summarizing project activities and key figures (ii) all reports of mapping activities on a CD and (iii) distribution maps Marine biocenoses in the pilot sites of the project. The pilot site of bel Moussa was visited on the first day of the forum, as it was the subject of a marine habitat mapping activity and, in a second phase, will be subject to the development of the management plan with a participatory approach. To this end, an exhibition of 29 panels was developed to highlight the marine and socio-economic biodiversity of the site and exposed throughout the duration of the forum. This exhibition was offered to Mohammed V University, the project's local partner. Also a calendar for 2017 with significant photos of the pilot sites was developed and distributed at the forum.

Editing and publication: In order to promote the standardized techniques/methodologies adopted in the framework of the Barcelona Convention, the following tools were published and distributed through the SPA/RAC website as from December 2015:

- Manual of interpretation of marine habitat types for the selection of sites to be included in national inventories of natural sites of conservation interest
- Standardized methods for the inventory and monitoring of coralligenous and maërl stands and lists of stands of the coralligenous and main species to be considered in the inventories and monitoring
- Guidelines for the Standardization of the Methods of Cartography and Surveillance of Marine Magnoliophytes in the Mediterranean
- Protocol for the establishment of a monitoring of Posidonia meadows

***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***

***Key Output 3.5.1: Capacity-building programmes related to the development and management of marine and coastal protected areas, to the conservation and monitoring of endangered and threatened coastal and marine species and key habitats, and to monitoring issues dealing with climate change and biodiversity developed and implemented, including pilots to support efforts aimed at MPA/SPAMI establishment and implementation***

**1. Organise specific training courses, workshops related to the conservation and monitoring of threatened and endangered Mediterranean coastal and marine species/ key habitats**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of training courses/workshop related to the conservation and monitoring of threatened and endangered Mediterranean coastal and marine species (Baseline: 0; Target: 2 training courses/workshops) ; Achieved: 3

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of country supported to implement biodiversity monitoring programmes (Baseline: 0; Target: 1 country; Achieved: 7)

In the framework of the EcAp-MEDII project, SPA/RAC is mandated to support the 07 concerned southern Mediterranean Contracting Parties (**Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia**) in the update/development of their national monitoring programme. The draft of the monitoring programmes will be validated during national workshops, implicating relevant institutions and potential experts in the monitoring of biodiversity and NIS common indicators. The national monitoring programmes need to include at least the monitoring of the reference list species and habitats with at least two monitoring areas, one in a low pressure area (e.g. marine protected area/ Specially Protected Area of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI) and one in a high pressure area from human activity.

Dedicated training for MPA managers, belonging to the mentioned above countries, regarding biodiversity and NIS common indicators monitoring and assessment will be held during this summer.

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of trainees benefiting from the training sessions on key habitats mapping and monitoring (Baseline: 0; Target: 10 trainees; Achieved: 105)

The Medkeyhabitats project organized training on mapping key habitats in the Mediterranean (18-21 August 2015) and contributed to the one on the Integrated Monitoring of Biodiversity in the Mediterranean (18-23 July 2016).

For **Libya** : Due to the situation, the activity of mapping marine key habitats in the framework of Medkeyhabitats project was interrupted and a training program was developed instead in collaboration with the Libyan FP for SPA. Participants from the General Authority for the Environment have been selected based on their ability to dive and their current and future work on habitats and marine protected areas.

A first training course, carried out in Corsica, **France**, from June 1 to 5, 2015, addressed the main aspects of mapping key marine habitats of conservation interest. This training tackled several practical and theoretical aspects on this topic but also allowed numerous exchanges with both trainers and managers of Marine Protected Areas

A second training course on the application of GIS techniques for mapping key marine habitats of conservation interest in the Mediterranean Sea was carried out at the Santa Pola Marine Research Center (CIMAR, Alicante, **Spain**, from 18 to 25 October 2015. In this training, Several practical and theoretical aspects were seen such as the Rapid Assessment Survey of marine habitats, the acquisition of cartographic data using the hydroplane technique, the identification of species and biocenoses using underwater photographs and the use of GIS for the development of habitat maps.

The field campaigns carried out in the framework of the mapping of key Mediterranean marine habitats of Cape Negro-Cap Serrat, **Tunisia**, provided an opportunity for Familiarize five managers of the EGA (**Libya**) with the methods of geophysical prospecting, the use of side scan sonar and the study of Posidonia Meadows.

In the framework of the capacity building Programme planned by SPA/RAC within the MedKeyHabitat project, a regional training on integrated monitoring of biodiversity in the Mediterranean has been organized from 18 to 23 July 2016 in Kuriat Island and Monastir, **Tunisia**.

The main objective of this training session was to provide national experts and managers of marine and coastal protected areas of Mediterranean countries with the practical tools needed for the inventory, characterization, mapping and monitoring of marine key habitats as well as for marine species of conservation interest in the Mediterranean. 9 participants from 9 countries (**Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia**) had attended. The training alternated theory and practical sessions (scuba diving, field work, sea trip on boat, camping on field, etc...). SPA/RAC has also supported the participation of tunisian students to attend national trainings on marine turtles nesting monitoring (Kuriat islands, August 2016) and birds identification methodologies (Djerba, January 2017)

### **3. Strengthen the existing capacity building mechanisms for MPA managers, and promote their coordination into a regional capacity building system; and run training activities on sustainable MPA financing**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of individual capacity building mechanisms mainstreamed into a unique regional capacity building system for MPA managers (Baseline: N/A, Target: 2 capacity building mechanisms; Achieved: 0)

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of MPA managers and practitioners trained on MPA sustainable financing by 2017 (Baseline: 0, Target: 4 trainees; Achieved: 0)

SPA/RAC is carrying out a long-term evaluation of its training programmes provided to MPA practitioners and marine conservationists since 2010. The detailed recommendations that will result from this review will be considered to improve SPA/RAC capacity-building delivery approach and techniques and increase its effectiveness.

### **2. Support countries for the monitoring of biodiversity and NIS in SPAMIs and other relevant MPAs**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Number of countries assisted to monitor biodiversity in SPAMIs and other relevant MPAs (Baseline: 0; Target: 1 country; Achieved: 7)

In the framework of the EcAp-MEDII project, SPA/RAC is mandated to support the 07 concerned southern Mediterranean Contracting Parties (**Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia**) in the update/development of their national monitoring programme. The draft of the monitoring programmes will be validated during national workshops, implicating relevant institutions and potential experts in the monitoring of biodiversity and NIS common indicators. The national monitoring programmes need to include at least the monitoring of the reference list species and habitats with at least two monitoring areas, one in a low pressure area (e.g. MPA, SPAMI) and one in a high pressure area from human activity.

Dedicated training for MPA managers, belonging to the mentioned above countries, regarding biodiversity and NIS common indicators monitoring and assessment will be held during this summer.

### **3. Support the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in the Mediterranean through training of practitioners**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Biodiversity and NIS country-level trainings (Baseline: 0; Target: 2 training courses/workshops; Achieved: 0)

Achieved external EC funding for a four and half years project to develop an Interoperable observatory platform, integrating networks of marine environment and maritime activity observing and forecasting

systems across the Mediterranean basin, addressing both the open sea and the coastal zone. At least two country-level training workshops of practitioners and two coordination meetings of technical country representatives to operate them in North Africa countries ensured, with the aim to cover **Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt**.

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

**Key Output 3.6.1:** *Joint strategies and programmes on biodiversity and ecosystem conservation developed, by taking into account NAPs in cooperation with relevant partner organisations at global and regional levels*

**1. Develop and implement an agreed strategic framework for the activities related to Mediterranean marine spatial management and conservation measures with key regional bodies**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Draft joint cooperation strategy between SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, GFCM and IUCN with the collaboration of MedPAN finalised and revised by each involved partner (Baseline: 0; Target: 1 joint strategy; Achieved: 1)

A document commonly developed to facilitate such cooperation was prepared: *WG.431/Inf.7 Enhancing UNEP/MAP Cooperation on Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity with regional partners through SPA/RAC*. It is in line with articles 25 and 28 of the SPA/BD Protocol of the Barcelona Convention (1995) and with article 16 of GFCM Agreement (2014) with regard to cooperation and partnership development. It includes a background on the mandates, activities and programmes of the 5 organisations, then it identifies commonalities and suitable areas for joining efforts and strengthening collaboration and harmonisation; followed by the steps which can be trailed, aiding to coordinate actions dealing with Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures

The Memorandum of Cooperation between SPA/RAC and WWF MedPO has been updated and being signed.

**Strategic Outcome 3.7:** *Identifying and tackling with new and emerging issues, as appropriate*

**Key Output 3.7.1:** *Coordination with the ongoing process towards the adoption of an implementing agreement on BBNJ (namely concerning marine genetic resources, marine protected areas BNJ, and SIA)*

**1. Coordination with the ongoing process towards the adoption of an implementing agreement on BBNJ (namely concerning marine genetic resources, marine protected areas BNJ, and SIA)**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Participation and/or contribution to relevant meetings documentation to advance in the topic (Baseline: 0; Target: 2 participations/contributions; Achieved: 2)

Contribution was provided to the UNEP/MAP inputs to the BBNJ process meetings taking place in UN HQs, to develop a comprehensive global regime to better address the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (UNGA Res. 69/292)

A compilation on the ongoing BBNJ process links to the Mediterranean Region was done in an information document for the Parties: *WG.431/Inf.9 Note on the legal framework for the protection of marine biological diversity in Mediterranean Sea areas beyond national jurisdictions or for which the limits of sovereignty or jurisdiction have not yet been defined (ABNJ)*

### **Core Theme 3: Land and Sea Interaction and Processes**

**Strategic Outcome 4.2:** *Development of new action plans, programmes of measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines*

**Key output 4.2.2:** *Strategic Outcome 4.2: Development of new action plans, programmes of measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines*

#### **1. Prepare the conceptual framework for Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** In-house expertise; consultancy; meetings (Baseline: 0; Target: 1 conceptual framework; Achieved: Final output under PAP/RAC responsibility)

Support was offered along the biennium to MSP Conceptual Framework tailored meetings of PAP/RAC providing technical and legal framework arguments backing the convenience of including the open sea areas in the MSP conceptual framework

A compilation was elaborated in an information document for the Parties on MSP related to the SPA/BD Protocol and open sea areas: *WG.431/Inf.8 Marine Spatial Planning and the protection of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) in the Mediterranean Sea*

### **Cross-Cutting Theme 3: Integrated Coastal Zone Management**

**Strategic Outcome 5.1:** *Strengthening regional implementation of the obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, and of programmes of measures in existing Regional Strategies and Action Plans*

**Key output 5.1.2:** *SAP BIO, SAP MED, Offshore Action Plan and Strategy to combat pollution from ships implemented in an integrated manner, including through the Mediterranean regional framework as set out in ICZM Protocol to enhance the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources*

#### **1. Define and agree upon the Mediterranean regional framework to be submitted for adoption by COP 20**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** regional framework document (Baseline: 0; Target: 1 Regional Framework document; Achieved: 1 - Joint RACs achievement)

SPA/RAC provided support to the elaboration of the Draft Regional Framework for ICZM in the Mediterranean 2017-2021, under the coordination of PAP/RAC

### **Cross-Cutting Theme: Climate Change**

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

**Key output 7.2.1:** *Climate Change Adaptation including related vulnerabilities and risks, key activities mainstreamed into the development of new/updated regional strategies, regional action plans and measures addressing biodiversity, pollution and land and sea interaction*

#### **1. Climate Change as transversal topic in the Mediterranean MPA Forum organised by SPA/RAC(Tangiers, 29 November-1 December 2016)**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** none for this biennium

The Mediterranean MPA Forum (Tangiers, **Morocco**, 29 November-1 December 2016) had Climate Change as a cross-cutting topic in order to strengthen marine aspects within international climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

**Strategic outcome 7.4:** Monitoring and assessment

**Key output 7.4.1:** *Climate Change vulnerability issues considered in existing monitoring programmes.*

**1. Identify and refine climate change impact indicators being used in SPAMIs to standardise them in SPAMIs and other Mediterranean areas**

**Indicators (Targets 2016-2017):** Elaborate on the priority indicators identified by experts to be monitored in Mediterranean MPAs (Baseline: 0; Target: 1 elaboration on the priority indicators; Achieved: 1)

A Guideline document was produced on 5 priority indicators of climate change impact been used in Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance: *WG.431/Inf.11 Identification and streamlining of climate Change Impact Indicators in Three Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI)*

**ANNEX-I-**

**Action Plan for the conservation of marines Turtles in the Mediterranean  
Partner**

**Request from the NGO “Notre Grand Bleu”**

Ahmed GHEDIRA  
Président de l'association Notre Grand Bleu  
Résidence Kairouan, Cap Marina, 5000 Monastir  
Monastir le 27 Mars 2017



**A Monsieur le Directeur du Centre d'Activités Régionales pour les Aires  
Spécialement protégées**

**Sujet :** Demande du titre "Partenaire du Plan d'Action pour la Conservation des tortues marines"

Cher Monsieur le Directeur,

L'association « Notre Grand Bleu », qui a aujourd'hui 5 ans d'existence, a pour objet la conservation de la biodiversité marine et la protection de l'environnement marin, particulièrement la Tortue marine « *Caretta caretta* ».

Dans ce cadre, l'association a mené depuis sa création de nombreuses actions liées au thème de la conservation de la tortue, que vous trouverez ci-joint.

Afin d'assurer le fonctionnement de l'association et l'aboutissement des objectifs mis en place pour conserver cette espèce menacée, nous serions honorés de pouvoir devenir un partenaire du Plan d'Action pour la Conservation des tortues marines

En espérant nous compter parmi vos futurs partenaires, je vous prie de croire, Monsieur, en l'expression de notre considération distinguée.

**Ahmed GHEDIRA**