



2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

The future we want for the Mediterranean Sea and coast— delivering on the SDGs while addressing the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution

29 June 2022, virtual

Organized by the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP) and its Regional Activity Centres:

- The Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication (INFO/RAC)
- The Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (MedWaves)
- The Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC)
- Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre (Plan Bleu)
- The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)
- The Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC)

Background on the event (one paragraph)

Since its inception in 1975, UNEP/MAP—the pioneer of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme— has set in motion an exemplary multilateral endeavor to tackle the rising tide of pollution. The scope of this endeavor has gradually expanded to encompass all the themes pertaining to land- and sea-based pollution, biodiversity conservation, coastal management and sustainable development. Today, the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system constitutes a unique legal, institutional and implementation framework that underpins sustainability and resilience in the Mediterranean region. Home to 512 million people, the Mediterranean is the theatre of mounting pressures on ecosystems. No less than 24 per cent of global shipping traffic passes through its waters annually. A staggering (estimated) 730 tons of plastic is discharged into the sea every day. The basin, which is also warming 20 per cent faster than the global average, is facing the impacts of the triple crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss. UNEP/MAP organized the side-event to explore pathways to accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by highlighting the strategies, instruments and tools that have been developed with the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in the pursuit of sustainable development in the Mediterranean region.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs, as a universally accepted blueprint for sustainability and resilience, have been integrated into the work of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system (notably through the [Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development - MSSD](#)).
- Environmental assessments and foresight studies, including the [State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean \(SoED\)](#)—produced by the Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre of UNEP/MAP—and the [First Mediterranean Assessment Report \(MAR1\)](#) of MedECC, a science-policy interface that UNEP/MAP supports, are replete with insights on the progress accomplished in the implementation of the SDGs in the Mediterranean. The SoED (released in 2020) indicates that, if current trajectories are not deflected, the Mediterranean region is not on track to achieving the SDGs.
- Several levers of transformative change that decision-makers in the Mediterranean can use to address the triple environmental crisis while scoring points in the achievement of the SDGs, which are outlined in the SoED report, are within reach and can be pulled to accelerate a decisive transition to a sustainable and resilient future.
- Biodiversity protection delivers benefits for the entire spectrum of the SDGs. Progress on SDG-14 in the Mediterranean was the focus of a presentation on the two newly adopted regional strategies on marine and coastal biodiversity in the Mediterranean in the context of the post-2020 agenda.
- At [COP 22 of the Barcelona Convention](#) (Antalya, Türkiye, 7-10 December 2021) the Contracting Parties adopted a ground-breaking proposal for the [designation of the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter \(Med SOx ECA\)](#) under regulation 14 of Annex VI to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). The formal designation of the Med SOx ECA will be put forward for adoption at the 79th session of the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) due to take place on 12-16 December 2022. This important development that will result in considerable benefits for people and nature means that the Mediterranean region is edging closer to an era of greener shipping. Med SOx ECA is expected to send signals across the sectors of the blue economy, and beyond, indicating that time has come to shift the needle.
- [PAMEx](#) and the [UNEP-GEF MedProgramme](#) (executed by UNEP/MAP), as well as other major programmes and regional developments are contributing to the much needed transition to sustainability with an ever expanding constellation of actions around the Mediterranean.
- Leveraging partnerships remains crucial. The UNEP/MAP-European Environment Agency (EEA) joint workplan (2022-2030) epitomizes the way institutions can work in synergy to deliver on common objectives in the Mediterranean. Promoting the sharing of knowledge and information for measuring sustainability is crucial to progress towards sustainable development in the region.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Mediterranean countries have committed to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) of the Mediterranean Sea and coast and, more broadly, the SDGs under the United Nations 2030 Agenda. A fundamental reorganization of economic and social systems, including changes in paradigms and values, is required to achieve these commitments.
- Urgent and collective efforts for transformative change are required to safeguard the Mediterranean environment, while simultaneously fostering human development, taking into account differences between Mediterranean countries.

- Knowledge and understanding of all aspects of sustainability are key to support evidence-based action for transition. Evidence-based policy is essential to alleviating pressure on the coastal zone on both sides of the land-sea interface, as highlighted in the [Common Regional Framework for ICZM](#) adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.
- The transformation of coastal and marine areas, activities and landscapes needs to be further anticipated in policies and actions. The sustainable management of biodiversity, including in protected areas, is dependent on adequate funding.
- The transitions that are required in all production and consumption systems cannot be brought about by policymakers alone. Changing development pathways is a responsibility shared by all stakeholders, and requires dialogue and partnership among government actors, civil society, the private sector, and the scientific community.
- Significant progress in addressing sustainability issues in the Mediterranean has been achieved and the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system has largely contributed to these achievements. Gaps in implementation and enforcement require attention and action.

Voluntary Commitments (one paragraph)