

**Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON)
Biodiversity and Fisheries**

Videoconference, 6-7 June 2024

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

1. The Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) of the United Nations Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan - Barcelona Convention Secretariat (UNEP/MAP) organized the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) Biodiversity and Fisheries (hereinafter referred to as the “meeting”) on 6 and 7 June 2024 by videoconference.

Participation

2. All the Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity (SPA/BD) Focal Points and/or Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group members and the relevant partners for the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) implementation, as appropriate, have been invited to designate their representatives to the CORMON meeting.

3. The following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention were represented at the meeting: Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Slovenia, Syria and Tunisia.

4. The following organizations were represented as observers: the ARION Cetacean Rescue and Rehabilitation Research Centre - Greece, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) - Greece, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Network of Marine Protected Areas Managers in the Mediterranean (MedPAN), the University of Thessalias - Greece and the World Wide Fund for Nature North Africa (WWF NA).

5. The following MAP Components: the Information and Communication Regional Activity Centre (INFO/RAC) and the Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC) were represented at the meeting.

6. The Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan - Barcelona Convention Secretariat (UNEP/MAP) was represented at the meeting.

7. SPA/RAC acted as the secretariat of the meeting.

Objectives of the meeting

8. The main objective of the meeting was to review the following documents:

- Development of IMAP Ecological Objectives (EOs): EO4 on marine food webs and EO6 on sea-floor integrity;
- Monitoring and assessment elements for the IMAP Common Indicators (CI1 and CI2) on benthic and pelagic marine habitats; and
- IMAP revision and preparatory elements for Biodiversity and Non-indigenous species (NIS).

Organizational matters

9. The meeting agreed that the rules of procedure for meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution and its related Protocols (UNEP/IG.43/6, Annex XI), as amended by the Contracting Parties (UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.1/5 and UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.3/5), would apply *mutatis mutandis* to their deliberations.

10. The meeting unanimously elected the following officers:

Chairperson:	Mr. Abdelmaula Hamza (Libya),
Vice-chairpersons:	Ms. Anna Lizinska (France), Ms. Tina Centrih Genov (Slovenia),
Rapporteur:	Mr. Luke Tabone (Malta).

11. The meeting agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations:

General considerations

12. The meeting expressed their gratitude for the clarity and comprehensiveness of the presentations made by the secretariat.

13. At the request of the meeting, participants are invited to provide their possible comments on the working documents by 28 June 2024, bearing in mind that these comments will not call for the conclusions and recommendations of the meeting.

Agenda Item 3: Development of EcAp Ecological Objectives

3.1. Development of the IMAP Ecological Objective 6 on sea-floor integrity under the Barcelona Convention

14. The meeting recommended maintaining EO1 (biodiversity) and EO6 (sea-floor integrity) as distinct ecological objectives, while optimizing and integrating their monitoring and data collection processes.

15. The meeting discussed and reviewed the document UNEP/MED WG.592/3, titled “Development of the EcAp Ecological Objective 6 on sea-floor integrity under the Barcelona Convention”, and agreed to submit it to the EcAp Coordination Group for consideration, at its meeting in October 2024.

3.2. Update regarding the development of the IMAP Ecological Objective 4 on Marine food webs under the Barcelona Convention

16. The meeting welcomed the proposal by Italy to extend the Italian Working Group for the monitoring of marine food-webs under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), to involve the SPA/RAC Secretariat and experts from the whole Mediterranean region in its work.

Agenda Item 4: IMAP common indicators on marine habitats

4.1. Element for the preparation of the assessment methodologies: assessment criteria and thresholds for biodiversity common indicators CI1 and CI2, based on the MedQSR 2023 recommendations.

17. The meeting recommended the establishment of a dedicated CI1 and CI2 Working Group for the three habitat types (Posidonia, Coralligenous, and Maerl), involving experts from all Mediterranean sub-regions,

to provide technical and operational science-based and cost-effective guidance, including the identification of the monitoring protocols' minimum common set of features, intercalibration exercises and the definition of assessment methodologies, assessment criteria and thresholds.

18. The meeting recommended the mobilization of a consultant to assist the SPA/RAC in coordinating, moderating and compiling the results of the work of the CI1 and CI2 dedicated working group for the three habitat types (Posidonia, Coralligenous, and Maerl) and to propose the elements for the preparation of assessment methodologies, assessment criteria, and thresholds for the common biodiversity indicators CI1 and CI2 for review and discussion by the meeting of the CORMON for biodiversity and fisheries in 2025.

4.2. Way forward to develop common indicators using phytoplankton and zooplankton for Pelagic Habitats

19. The meeting agreed to mandate the multidisciplinary group of experts on pelagic habitats to discuss and agree on the ways, means and timeline to advance in the development of the indicators using phytoplankton and zooplankton for relevant IMAP biodiversity indicators.

Agenda item 5: Elements for IMAP Revision related to Biodiversity and Non-Indigenous Species (NIS)

20. The meeting stressed the importance of not adding a separate Ecological Objective (EO) on climate change, but rather adapting the existing EOs and Common Indicators (CIs) to integrate climate change aspects.

21. The meeting took note of the “Elements for IMAP Revision related to Biodiversity and Non-Indigenous Species (NIS)” contained in document UNEP/MED WG.592/7 and requested the SPA/RAC secretariat to use it as a basis to contribute for the updating process of the IMAP related to biodiversity and fisheries.

22. The meeting called on the Contracting Parties to actively support the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap Policy revision, including biodiversity and fisheries IMAP updating process.