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Barcelona (Spain), 24 February 2023

**Agenda item 4:** Review of the Draft Resource Mobilisation Strategy for the implementation of the Post-2020 SAPBIO, including the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures in the Mediterranean

**Project Concept 1 :**

**Conserving biodiversity and promoting blue economy as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Mediterranean through MCPAs and OECMs**



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Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC)  
Boulevard du Leader Yasser Arafat  
B.P. 337 - 1080 Tunis Cedex - Tunisia  
E-mail: [car-asp@spa-rac.org](mailto:car-asp@spa-rac.org)



**Project Concept 1:**

**Conserving biodiversity and promoting blue economy as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Mediterranean through MCPAs and OECMs**



## **Project 1: Conserving biodiversity and promoting blue economy as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Mediterranean through MCPAs and OECMs**

### **Issues at stake**

Marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are recognised as effective tools for preserving natural sites. In the Mediterranean, since the adoption in 1995 of the Barcelona Convention's Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity (SPA/BD), a number of strategies, programmes, action plans and roadmaps have been developed to help the Contracting Parties meet their obligations under the Protocol in relation to the protection and management of natural sites of conservation interest.

However, despite the important achievements, gaps persist in terms of geographical balance, representativeness and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). These gaps have been identified as the main challenges to be considered within the framework of the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean adopted in 2021 by 21 Mediterranean countries and the EU, which are the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

For the achievement of the five Strategic outcomes of the Strategy, most of the Mediterranean countries need substantial technical and financial support, in particular concerning the expansion of the network of MCPAs, the improvement of their management effectiveness and the identification of marine and coastal OECMs in the Mediterranean, their recognition and reporting towards the post-2020 global and regional targets. Indeed, funding shortages and discontinuity are remarked in the national and subregional assessments as the recurring obstacles to the development and sustainability of effective MCPAs and OECMs throughout the Mediterranean.

Although often perceived by the public and some stakeholders to be in direct competition with human economic activities, MCPAs have an important potential to play a functional and supportive role to promote a sustainable blue economy. In this context, there is a need to ensure a wider recognition of the socio-economic values of MCPAs and OECMs and their role in helping to achieve other non-biodiversity conservation agendas, especially through opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. Ensuring that MCPAs and the blue economy work in tandem to promote sustainable growth, decent work and reduce poverty is another challenge for the Mediterranean countries.

### **Links with relevant International/Regional Policies**

To be developed in the full concept.

### **Geographical coverage of the project**

The project will focus on the Mediterranean countries **with particularly low MCPA coverage**, such as the **Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries**. It will be implemented in the following countries: (to be developed in consultation with the SAPBIO National Correspondents)

## Project Work packages

### Work package 1: MCPA Network Expansion

#### **Activity 1.1 Inventory of areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services**

##### Rationale

The coverage of marine protected areas is far from being representative of the Mediterranean Sea biodiversity. Increasing the MCPA coverage requires that areas important for biodiversity and ecosystem services are clearly identified across the region, in particular in countries with particularly low MCPA coverage, such as the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries.

The Dark Habitats Action Plan adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Decision IG.25/13) urged countries to Implement and/or extend MPAs to include already identified sites of interest that host dark habitats at a national level and in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ).

##### Description of the activity

This activity will consist in adequately supporting the identification of areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services and sharing information through regional platforms in particular for under-represented ecosystems such as offshore and deep-sea ecosystems, and those situated in areas beyond national jurisdictions (ABNJ). National plans/strategies will be developed to establish ecologically coherent national MCPA systems with clear priorities and time-frames, based on gap analysis to identify and prioritize areas requiring conservation along with their expected level of protection considering their natural, cultural and landscape values and associated ecosystem services.

Under this activity the following actions will be implemented:

Action	Expected results	Proposed Partners (Not limited to/tbc)
Action 1.1.1 National inventories of areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services	National plans (or strategies) for establishing an ecologically coherent national MCPA system with clear priorities, levels of protection and time-frames, based on priority natural, cultural and landscape values and associated ecosystem services	SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-Med, MedPAN, ETC-UMA
Action 1.1.2 Inventories of areas with vulnerable ecosystems located in ABNJ	A regional plan for establishing appropriate protection regimes for the areas with vulnerable ecosystems located in ABNJ taking into account the Joint Cooperation Strategy on Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity signed by the Secretariats of UNEP/MAP, ACCOBAMS, GFCM and IUCN-Med.	SPA/RAC, REMPEC, ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-Med, ETC-UMA

## Implementation timetable

Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	

**Activity 1.2 Establishment of soundly designed MCPAs, including areas with enhanced protection levels and encompassing areas beyond national jurisdiction**

Rationale

Among the urgent action over the decade to 2030, the Contracting Parties to CBD agreed to ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (Target 3).

In the Mediterranean, the MPA coverage is still not balanced in terms of geographical distribution and representativeness of the Mediterranean ecoregions since most of the existing MPAs are located in the northern part of the Mediterranean and in coastal waters. Furthermore, the number and coverage of MCPAs with enhanced protection levels need to be increased, including by reviewing protection measures and statuses of existing MCPAs.

Description of the activity

This activity will support Mediterranean countries with particularly low MCPA coverage to establish new protected areas within their territories. The assistance to be provided relates to the technical, scientific and legal support for the delimitation of the candidate MCPAs, the identification of protection and management measures applicable to each proposed MCPA and the facilitation of stakeholder consultation. A special focus will be on building capacity and experience sharing to promote connectivity and complementarity of MCPAs and for the creation of new MCPAs with enhanced protection levels, including no-take zones. To this end, tools for monitoring, documenting and communicating the impacts of MCPAs with enhanced protection levels will be produced and made available.

Under this activity the following actions will be implemented:

Action	Expected Results	Proposed Partners (Not limited to/tbc)
Action 1.2.1 Establishment by countries of well-connected, soundly designed and effective MCPA national systems	Increased coverage of MCPA Distribution of MCPA systems across the Mediterranean Sea is balanced	SPA/RAC, IUCN-Med, MedPAN, ETC-UMA
Action 1.2.2 Facilitate collaboration between neighbouring countries to protect areas with vulnerable ecosystems located in ABNJ using existing instruments (SPAMIs, FRAs, PSSA, etc.)	A regional plan for establishing appropriate protection regimes for the areas with vulnerable ecosystems located in ABNJ	SPA/RAC, REMPEC, ACCOBAMS, GFCM, ETC-UMA

Implementation timetable

Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	

Work package 2: Marine and coastal OECMs

**Activity 2.1 Promote understanding of OECM criteria and conducting the needed processes for the recognition and reporting to MAPAMED and WD-OECM of potential and candidate OECMs**

Rationale

In 2018, the CBD defined an "other effective area-based conservation measure" as: "A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values".

OECMs allow recognizing efforts and contributions by other sectors to biodiversity conservation. Some OECMs may host important biodiversity and ecosystem services that would benefit from additional area-based measures to increase their biodiversity outcomes and should therefore be prioritized in cross-sectoral marine spatial planning so that new OECMs can be established.

Although no marine OECMs are currently recognized in the Mediterranean region, there has been some experience among Contracting Parties in the recognition of terrestrial OECMs. These present an opportunity for learning and adapting these to the marine context.

Description of the activity

This activity will focus on (i) supporting Contracting Parties in understanding OECM criteria and ensuring appropriate and harmonized approaches to the application and testing of sites against these criteria and (ii) building capacities of Mediterranean countries on the identification of OECMs and the application of OECM criteria. Further guidance and support will be provided for potential and candidate OECM recognition and reporting to relevant regional and global databases.

Under this activity the following actions will be implemented:

Action	Expected Results	Proposed Partners (Not limited to/tbc)
Action 2.1.1 Communication and awareness about OECMs and their role in contributing to biodiversity conservation and SDGs across Contracting Parties and sectors	Understanding and awareness of Contracting Parties and stakeholders on OECMs enhanced	SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, IUCN-Med, MedPAN, ETC-UMA
Action 2.1.2 Assist countries to establish multi-stakeholder platforms to identify potential	OECMs identified, recognized and reported to relevant regional and global databases	

OECMs using relevant screening tools		
Action 2.1.3 Training programme on the identification of OECMs and the application of OECM criteria	Enhanced capacity of the Mediterranean countries for the identification, designation and reporting of OECMs	

Implementation timetable

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3

Work package 3: MCPA Management

**Activity 3.1 Ensure that all MCPAs develop integrated conservation and management measures**

Rationale

Ensuring adequate conservation of biodiversity through MCPAs goes beyond simply increasing their geographical coverage but requires that they benefit from effective management.

In the Mediterranean, one of the significant persisting weaknesses regarding MPAs is that less than one-fourth of the Mediterranean MPAs has a management plan, and less than half of these are effectively implemented. Management plans are crucial tools in providing clear guidance to both MCPA managers and users of the area. They should be developed in close consultation with stakeholders.

Lack of sufficient and sustainable finances and lack of institutional and staff capacity have been identified across all Mediterranean countries as the main barriers to effective management plan elaboration and implementation.

There is therefore a clear need to support the development of practical and cost-effective management plans for MPACs in the region as well as to ensure the review of those that require updates.

Description of the activity

This activity will start with the assessment of (i) the status of MCPA management plans in the Mediterranean to identify where they are lacking and where they need review/updating and (ii) the capacity development (training) needs of the MCPA staff across the region. Based on the results of these assessments, the countries participating in the project will be assisted to develop/review the management plans of their respective MCPAs. Simultaneously regional and national training will be carried out, including through exchange of experience.

Under this activity the following actions will be implemented:

Action	Expected Results	Proposed Partners (Not limited to/tbc)
Action 3.1.1 Identify MCPAs where management plans are lacking and assess the effectiveness of existing management plans	Effectiveness of existing management plans for MCPAs is assessed.  All MCPAs have management plans integrating conservation and	SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, IUCN-Med, MedPAN, MedFund, ETC-UMA

Action 3.1.2 Assist countries to develop or review the management plans of their MCPAs	management measures that include MCPA conservation challenges beyond their border, climate change mitigation and adaptation actions, a zoning plan, and site-specific measures for all marine activities	
Action 3.1.3 Regional and national training programmes based on the assessment of MCPA staff training needs	Improved skills of the Mediterranean MCPA staff A long-term capability of national MCPA managers and planners to develop and periodically review their MCPA management plans, is developed	

Implementation timetable

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3

**Activity 3.2 Promote, through pilot action, the integration of a sustainable blue economy in the management plans of MCPAs**

Rationale

Small-Scale Fishing (SSF) and nature-based tourism and other uses of the marine environment may contribute to better integrate MCPAs within their socioeconomic contexts while ensuring a high level of ownership and adherence from the local populations to the conservation objectives. Although there are examples of successful integration of sustainable human activities in some Mediterranean MCPAs, such approaches are still lacking in many countries, in particular in the Southern Mediterranean where there is a high level of reluctance from fishers and other sea users in relation to the establishment of MCPAs in their zones.

Description of the activity

This activity will consist of a series of pilot actions to promote small-scale sustainable fishing and nature-based tourism in and around MCPAs. This will include for each pilot action a feasibility study to assess its sustainability after the project lifespan as well as a wide consultation process at the local and national level to define the beneficiaries, the needed support and the required institutional/legal arrangements.

This activity will include the following actions:

Action	Expected Results	Proposed Partners (Not limited to/tbc)
Action 3.2.1 Pilot actions to promote sustainable small-scale fishing in MCPAs	Demonstrated added value of MCPAs in terms of social and	SPA/RAC, GFCM

Action 3.2.2 Pilot actions to promote nature-based tourism in MCPAs	economic benefits and ecosystem services they generate.	SPA/RAC, Plan Bleu, IUCN-Med
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Implementation timetable

Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	

**Activity 3.3 Assist countries in using MCPAs and OECMs as nature-based solutions to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation**

Rationale

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention agreed among the targets they adopted within the Post-2020 SAPBIO that by 2030, all Mediterranean countries have adopted and started implementing short- and medium-term measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation. They also recommended the inclusion of MCPA initiatives in NDCs and other climate-related programmes.

In addition to their potential to contribute, as nature-based solutions, in the efforts to the mitigation of and adaptation to Climate Change, MCPAs, may also play a role as sentinels in the monitoring and early detection of the impacts of Climate Change on ecosystems, particularly seawater warming and acidification.

Description of the activity

The actions under this activity will be oriented towards enhancing knowledge of the role of MCPAs and promoting their inclusion in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and other climate-related programmes. As recommended by the Post-2020 SAPBIO, a coordinated climate change monitoring network will be established in the Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) to provide countries with climate-related information for early warning, risk assessment, mitigation strategies and adaptation plans. Under this activity, the project will also assist MCPAs to elaborate their respective plans for adaptation to the effect of Climate Change on their ecosystems.

Action	Expected Results	Proposed Partners (Not limited to/tbc)
Action 3.3.1 Coordinated climate change monitoring network in SPAMIs	Enhanced knowledge of the role of MCPAs in relation to Climate Change  Climate-related information for early warning, risk assessment, mitigation strategies and adaptation plans	SPA/RAC, IUCN-Med, MedECC
Action 3.3.2 Assistance to MCPAs in the elaboration of their respective plans for adaptation to the effect of Climate Change	Enhanced resilience of MCPAs to Climate Change	SPA/RAC, Plan Bleu, IUCN-Med

Implementation timetable

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3

#### Work package 4: Project coordination and management

The Project implementation will be coordinated by SPA/RAC in collaboration with the Project partners and with the guidance of a Steering Committee composed of representatives of the participating countries and the Project partners.

The rules of procedure for the Steering Committee will be defined in close consultation with the financing partner(s).

A full-time project coordinator and an administrative assistant will be appointed for the project duration.

In addition to the regular reporting to the financing partner(s), reports about the progress made in the implementation of the project will be submitted by SPA/RAC to the SPA/BD Focal Points. The other partners may also report to their respective relevant governing bodies.

A mid-term evaluation and Final evaluation of the project will be undertaken taking into account the result indicators to be agreed in the logical framework of the project

#### Project partners

A short presentation will be given here for each of the Project partners (to be provided by the partners).

## Project Timetable

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Work package 1: MCPA Network Expansion	<b><u>Activity 1.1 Inventory of areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services</u></b>			
	<b><u>Activity 1.2 Assistance to countries for the establishment of soundly designed MCPAs, including areas with enhanced protection levels and encompassing areas beyond national jurisdiction</u></b>			
Work package 2: Marine and coastal OECMs	<b><u>Activity 2.1 Assistance to countries in understanding OECM criteria and conducting the needed processes for the recognition and reporting to MAPAMED and WD-OECM of potential and candidate OECM</u></b>			
Work package 3: MCPA Management	<b><u>Activity 3.1 Assist countries to identify MCPAs where management plans are lacking and ensure that all MCPAs develop integrated conservation and management measures</u></b>			
	<b><u>Activity 3.2 Promote, through pilot action, the integration of sustainable blue economy in the management plans of MCPAs (SSF, nature-based tourism)</u></b>			
	<b><u>Activity 3.3 Assist countries in using MCPAs and OECMs as nature-based solutions to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation</u></b>			

## Project Cost estimates

	Expected funding from donor(s) (US\$)	Expected Co-funding	Total Estimated cost (US\$)
<u>Activity 1.1 Inventory of areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services</u>	195 000		
<u>Activity 1.2 Assistance to countries for the establishment of soundly designed MCPAs, including areas with enhanced protection levels and encompassing areas beyond national jurisdiction</u>	550 000		
<u>Activity 2.1 Assistance to countries in understanding OECM criteria and conducting the needed processes for the recognition and reporting to MAPAMED and WD-OECM of potential and candidate OECM</u>	260 000		
<u>Activity 3.1 Assist countries to identify MCPAs where management plans are lacking and ensure that all MCPAs develop integrated conservation and management measures</u>	1 170 000		
<u>Activity 3.2 Promote, through pilot action, the integration of sustainable blue economy in the management plans of MCPAs (SSF, nature-based tourism)</u>	500 000		
<u>Activity 3.3 Assist countries in using MCPAs and OECMs as nature-based solutions to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation</u>	700 000		
<u>Project coordination</u>	450 000		
<b><u>Total</u></b>	3 825 000		

