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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Fourth Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Strategic
Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological
Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (SAP BIO)

Malaga, 4 July 2012

**REPORT OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF
THE STRATEGIC ACTION PROGRAMME FOR THE CONSERVATION OF
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (SAP BIO) IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

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Introduction

At their Seventeenth Ordinary Meeting held in Paris from 8 to 10 February 2012, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols invited the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) to update the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (SAP BIO) with the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and ecosystems approach.

As part of the implementation of Component 3 “Conservation of biological diversity: Implementation of SAP BIO and related National Action Plans (NAPs)”, Sub-component 3.1 “Conservation of coastal and marine diversity through the development of a Mediterranean marine and coastal protected areas (MPAs) network” of the “Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem” (UNEP/MAP-FEM MedPartnership), RAC/SPA was invited to organize three SAP BIO Advisory Committee meetings and three SAP BIO National Correspondents meetings, during the five-year lifespan of the Project.

After having convened the Second Meeting of National Correspondents of SAP BIO/MedMPAnet Project Inception Workshop in Istanbul, Turkey, on 2 June 2010, RAC/SPA convened the Fourth Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (SAP BIO).

The meeting was held in Malaga (Spain) at the Hotel Barceló Málaga, Héroe de Sostoa, 2, 29002 Malaga, on 4 July 2012, with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment of Spain and the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med).

The Members of the SAP BIO Advisory Committee were invited to attend the Meeting or designate their representative(s). The full list of participants is attached to this Report as annex I.

Agenda item 1 - Opening of the Meeting

The Meeting was opened on Wednesday, 4 July 2012 at 9.30 a.m. by Mr Abderrahmen Gannoun, Director of RAC/SPA, who welcomed participants and presented the context and objectives of the Meeting. He said that it was time to take stock of the implementation of SAP BIO in order to adapt and update it in keeping with new global and regional objectives, including the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 adopted at the CoP in Nagoya, Japan.

Agenda item 2 - Rules of Procedure

The internal rules adopted 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, Appendix XI) applied *mutatis mutandis* to the meeting.

Agenda item 3 - Election of Officers

The Meeting elected a Chairman, Mr Abderrahmen GANNOUN (Director of RAC/SPA), a Vice-Chairman, Mr Alain JEUDY DE GRISSAC (IUCN-Med) and a Rapporteur, Mr Juan Antonio CAMIÑAS (FAO).

Agenda item 4 - Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

The Provisional Agenda, UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.370/1, proposed by the Secretariat and

distributed in annotated version as UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.370/2, was adopted by the members (Annex II). The Meeting also adopted the timetable proposed at the end of document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.370/2).

The Meeting's working languages were English and French. Simultaneous interpretation into English, French and Spanish was available during the session.

Agenda Item 5 - Progress so far made in the implementation of SAP BIO

The Secretariat provided information on the progress made in implementing SAP BIO since its adoption in 2003, with regard to regional projects already developed or under development. SAP BIO had originally been adopted as a framework programme for preserving the environment in the Mediterranean and RAC/SPA's role had been to catalyze national and regional activities undertaken to achieve that aim. Over 40 countries, both Contracting Parties and non contacting parties (members of the European Union), had agreed on the need for a common integrated strategy to reduce pollution and other forms of human disturbance of ecosystems in the Mediterranean Sea. However, their priorities had changed since the adoption of SAP BIO in 2003.

With a view to revising SAP BIO, RAC/SPA had been taking a participatory approach, working at the national and regional levels to determine the ecological state of the Mediterranean sea while identifying the different priorities. Over 150 individuals had been working on that huge coordination effort and had identified more than 30 priority actions in fields as varied as ecosystems, marine protected areas, pollution, fisheries and fishery resources, marine mammals and invertebrates. With regard to the existing RAC/SPA fields of action, seven main axes had been adopted by the parties, since 2004-2005 based in SAP BIO requirements, as compared with the classical species-by-species approach. Currently RAC/SPA was assisting countries with the implementation of their NAPs and supporting regional projects on issues such as biodiversity, coastal areas and the open seas, while improving regional synergies and encouraging joint activities to avoid overlaps.

The Secretariat presented the state of progress of and follow-up to the MedMPAnet Project, to be found in document "MedMPAnet Project implementation and follow-up" (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.371/3). MedMPAnet is an important project to support the biological diversity of vulnerable resources in the Mediterranean Sea, in keeping with the CBD's goal to achieve an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas. The overall aim of the project is to apply best methodological practices for MPAs creation throughout the region.

Regarding the document entitled "Joint Management between the Mediterranean Action Plan and the European Commission on the identification of potential sites for creating SPAMIs in the open seas, including the deep seas" (Results of the second phase project – Objectives and outlines of the third phase project) (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.371/4), the Secretariat presented the state of implementation of the Open Seas SPAMIs Project during its two previous phases and the new follow-up planned during phase III. The open seas and deep seas had not previously been reachable priorities but the EC's contribution had made the new project possible.

The Secretariat introduced document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.370/Inf.3 ("Indicators for impacts of climate change on marine and coastal biodiversity"), intended to inform and obtain inputs and ideas from the meeting on the key issue of climate change impacts follow-up in the Region. The Committee was informed on the possibility that EC funding would be available for a study of the effects of climate change in the Mediterranean region. RAC/SPA had recently been mandated by the Parties to develop at least one priority regional project concerning the

responses and mitigation of the impacts of climate change, which posed a major challenge owing to the lack of a clear picture of exactly what its impacts were.

The Secretariat presented a project concept note related to aquaculture management in coastal wetlands, developed in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.371/Inf.3 ("Proposal related to climate change impacts mitigation and Ecosystem Approach to management of aquaculture: Mediterranean wetlands and lagoons rehabilitation project concept") and its related case study presented in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.371/Inf.4 ("Ecosystem approach to Aquaculture management and biodiversity conservation in a Mediterranean coastal wetland: case study of Doñana marshes (Andalucia, Spain)"). This project responds to the need to fulfil SAP BIO regional priorities regarding wetlands and to the Parties request for elaboration of projects addressing climate change response issues.

The Chairperson opened the discussion and all participants agreed on the need for more cooperation and closer synergy between the different regional and subregional Mediterranean bodies. The representative of ACCOBAMS Secretariat, referring in particular to the conservation of cetaceans, emphasized the importance of national plans for preserving biodiversity; she mentioned it would be useful therefore to have a single document per country outlining all the national priorities on marine and conservation issues, especially since different ministries are often involved. Moreover, she stressed the comprehensive nature of SAP BIO, involving all of UNEP/MAP RACs activities and not only RAC-SPA. She requested more information about how RAC/SPA envisaged working with the Contracting Parties on the roadmap.

The representative of FAO said that the organization was especially working at the Mediterranean Sea in marine protected areas and coastal areas in relation to identifying and addressing unsustainable fishing practice and on the application of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the incorporation of fishers' associations to the MPA management systems. He also added the cooperation with RAC/SPA on the formulation of a new project for the rehabilitation of Mediterranean wetlands and lagoons. The representative informed that FAO looked forward to working closely with RAC/SPA on its project. The Ecosystem Approach for Fisheries Management, the International guidelines for the securing sustainable SSF (small scale fisheries), the International Action Plan on Sharks and climate change were mentioned as another of FAO's leading priorities for the Mediterranean Sea. The FAO representative informed that FAO regional projects AdriaMed, CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed cover the whole Mediterranean region working together for securing sustainable fisheries and reinforcing regional cooperation and synergies with the regional organisations as UNEP/MAP.

The representative of IUCN-Med said that IUCN looked forward to the inclusion of new partners in the advisory process. His only criticism of RAC/SPA's work was the slowness of information flows to its partners and Contracting Parties. While he understood that the decision-making processes were inevitably lengthy, he felt that information should be disseminated more quickly on the website. Regarding the case study on wetlands rehabilitation, he praised it but wondered whether more work should not be done to assist smaller scale projects. He added that with new methods being applied sight should not be lost of the importance of the protection of individual species. The representative of MedPAN pledged the support of her organization for the work being done to promote conservation in the Mediterranean while the representative of MedWet welcomed, in particular, the proposal for wetlands and climate change projects, as those topics were at the top of its agenda and would become increasingly important in the future. The representative of Conservatoire du littoral expressed concern at the current pressures on national budgets, which were adversely affecting protected areas; that made increased synergies and avoidance of overlaps even greater priorities than before. The representative of WWF MedPO said that her organization had cooperated with RAC/SPA for

many years and that it was very important to work on wetlands conservation, although marine issues were higher on its agenda.

The Secretariat agreed that while protected areas were important, the conservation of species was part and parcel of RAC/SPA's work and the Centre kept implementing specific action plans. More details about how individual species preservation would be addressed in the review of SAP BIO would be given during the Third Meeting of National Correspondents, during which more time would also be given to examining national activities. The Secretariat acknowledged a degree of inertia in the dissemination of official information and documentation although it should be recalled that reports had to be validated by the various authorities before they could be posted on the website, fact that compensated delay with added value.

The participants' satisfaction with the level of implementation of SAP BIO to date was welcomed and concerns about the next phase were shared. It was recalled that the first SAP BIO had been adopted in 2003 but not fully implemented, owing to a lack of funding. UNEP/MAP had, until recently, lacked a strategy for the mobilization of funds, fact compensated by a strategy developed by RAC/SPA on its own. The Secretariat hoped that the new funding strategy adopted at the latest CoP would improve the programme implementation in the future. The Secretariat agreed that the Advisory Committee should involve all partners striving to protect biodiversity in the Mediterranean and possibly open up to representatives of further conventions and treaties.

The Secretariat suggested that the frequency of consultations should be stepped up and meetings should be held at least twice a year in future. For the next phase of SAP BIO, RAC/SPA still needed to choose a methodology and find ways of involving the Contracting Parties in the revision process. The Advisory Committee provided a cornerstone for coordinating the process and ensuring the participation of all stakeholders.

Agenda item 6 - Evaluation of SAP BIO implementation by the regional bodies

In accordance with document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/Inf.5 ("Forms for the evaluation of SAP BIO implementation by the Contracting Parties and regional bodies"), the Members of the SAP BIO Advisory Committee had been asked to provide the Secretariat with their contributions for completion of the forms on the state of progress of SAP BIO with regard to the various regional priorities, to serve as the basic information for evaluating SAP BIO implementation.

The Members of the SAP BIO Advisory Committee briefly outlined the progress made by their respective organizations on their contributions to the achievement of the SAP BIO regional priorities at the regional and/or national levels since adoption in 2003, in accordance with the pertinent sections of document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/Inf.5. They all mentioned the number of Memoranda of Understanding signed between their organizations and many others, including those represented on the Committee.

The representative of IUCN-Med described its new initiatives in marine protected areas, including novel projects undertaken in cooperation with FAO to work in connection with fisheries, in Lebanon, Libya and Morocco. IUCN had always focused on non-European countries because the countries in the South of the Mediterranean lagged behind in comparison with those in the North. IUCN-Med had a special coordinator for North Africa, helping partners in five countries to develop relationships and pinpoint expertise. The issue of governance was of particular interest, often through informal initiatives. IUCN-Med cooperated with RAC/SPA on national legislation. Many countries were reforming environmental legislation and it was important to obtain information on laws affecting protected areas. In addition to important

projects aimed at comparing and contrasting data collection in various countries, IUCN-Med was also undertaking interesting work on blue carbon assessments, which could prove highly lucrative as well as helping to protect the marine environment.

The representative of ACCOBAMS stressed the importance of national activities, especially with regard to the protection of cetaceans. ACCOBAMS acted as a platform for national project implementation, for example in the case of Italy and other Adriatic countries, which had held campaigns to evaluate their cetacean populations. It was important for RAC/SPA to have access to the data obtained through such projects, which were often available only in national reports. ACCOBAMS was developing guidelines to help countries implement their preservation plans and setting up an interactive database for all activities of national interest. They had developed a label for whale-watching and had designed a project to ascertain numbers of cetaceans in the Agreement area seas; it still needed a fundraiser as the estimated cost would be some 5 million Euros. In addition, plans to protect dolphins were afoot. ACCOBAMS had held workshops for capacity-building and had created a number of tools for raising awareness and teaching. A teaching module for cetacean preservation had been produced in French and it was hoped that an English version would soon be ready. Countries were given assistance to implement their own projects or determine the ecological impact on cetaceans at the national level. There had been few ACCOBAMS activities on climate change to date but a workshop on the subject was planned for later in 2012, in cooperation with RAC/SPA.

The representative of Conservatoire du Littoral informed that his organization was dedicated to providing institutional, technical and legal support, mostly in the western Mediterranean and, above all, in the Maghreb. For many years those countries had faced difficulties in implementing protection and conservation measures. In recent years it had extended its work from coastal areas and wetland to include small islands. The Conservatoire suggested processes and provisions for the management of protected areas, building cooperation between scientists, managers and associations, who relied on each other in order to operate effectively. Young teams in the Maghreb countries often found it hard to start their activities and the Conservatoire offered them training, often in the field. One success story was the eradication of black rats on the island of Zembra (Tunisia). In cooperation with RAC/SPA, the Conservatoire had led a successful mission to the El Kouf national park, Libya, to determine the ecological heritage of its coastline. Also in cooperation with RAC/SPA, the Conservatoire had produced a number of monographs on the protection of a dozen marine birds endemic to the Mediterranean. He reiterated his concerns about the pressures exerted on biodiversity by current political and social changes.

The representative of MedWet said that his organization concentrated on producing tools for use in inventorying and monitoring. It had produced two manuals on different aspects of inventories, in 1996 and 2008. The later version included guidelines for data collection on habitats and descriptions of wetlands mapping. An online database allowed users to store and retrieve data. MedWet had also produced a series of reports and set up an observatory of Mediterranean wetlands based on its inventories. One of its activities of particular relevance to SAP BIO was the "living planet index", a methodology for assessing the state of biodiversity worldwide. The same methodology could be applied to Mediterranean wetlands. It had also worked on improving data, as they varied from country to country or species to species (for example, data on birds were better than those on reptiles and amphibians). He also mentioned the Globwetland project, an initiative led by the European Space Agency in collaboration with the Ramsar Convention secretariat, which used remote sensing to map wetlands in a way that facilitated management and monitoring. A number of sites around the region had been mapped and the project was due to be extended to the rest of the Mediterranean.

The representative of MedPAN said that her organization was very young and was currently finalizing its first work programme. She stressed that most of its activities were derived from the Barcelona Convention, other international agreements and European Union policy. MedPAN was involved in an analysis of marine protected areas in the Mediterranean and would present a new database on protected areas by the end of 2012. Support for small projects, capacity-building and communication were its main priorities. Her organization helped provide a nexus between project managers and international and regional structures, which the former often found difficult to achieve alone. Over the next five years, MedPAN was due to work on its own strategy, including a scientific strategy that would be directly linked to SAP BIO.

The representative of WWF MedPO recalled that its Mediterranean programme had started in 1994, with the headquarters in Rome and offices in other cities, such as the fisheries section hosted by Barcelona, Spain. It had been focusing on the setting up of marine protected areas and regulating the protection of habitats. It had advocated the use of more sustainable fishing methods along with the monitoring and assessment of species of turtles and monk seals. The bluefin tuna was its flagship species: WWF MedPO had participated in political and scientific work on the species, including a tagging scheme and DNA analyses to detect illegal catches. In the field of awareness-raising, WWF MedPO had recently been working on artisanal fisheries.

The representative of FAO informed that, taking an ecosystem approach, his department focused on the sustainability of fish resources to improve food supplies and safeguard the livelihoods of fishermen and their families. It produced models, guidelines and brochures and held international meetings to implement the new concept of the ecosystem approach in fisheries management. It was using lessons learned worldwide to improve fisheries management within the Mediterranean, while cooperating in the areas of training and capacity-building. One of its most important tools was the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing, and the recent analysis of the level of implementation at country level, which results will be presented during the COFI (Committee on Fisheries) meetings that would be held in Rome (9-13 July) with a view to its effective implementation. Other areas of FAO's work included the conservation of shark species and the involvement of artisanal fishermen in the management of marine protected areas, for example in Morocco. Guidelines were being prepared to prevent the by-catch of non-targeted species, including marine mammals and turtles. FAO experts were working on climate change; each of the Mediterranean regional FAO projects had harmonised webpage and had produced important documents for the region.. FAO's cooperation with countries to preserve marine ecosystems in the region was focused on four zones: the western Mediterranean, the Adriatic, the central Mediterranean and, most recently, the eastern Mediterranean.

The Meeting took note of the information provided, which would assist the exchanges of information on SAP BIO implementation to be held during the Third Meeting of National Correspondents of SAP BIO.

The Secretariat explained that, with regard to the methodology and procedure to be used in evaluating the SAP BIO status of implementation and the achievements made to date by the Contracting Parties and regional bodies concerned, there would be bilateral talks on a country-by-country and partner-by-partner basis, after which a synthetic summary document would need to be produced.

Agenda item 7 - SAP BIO roadmap for updating the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, with regard to the Ecosystem Approach process within MAP

The Secretariat presented the “Draft Roadmap for the Updating of the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity (SAP BIO)”, to be found in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.371/5. Evaluation of the implementation of the existing SAP BIO was due for completion by the end of 2013.

The Meeting considered and discussed the draft roadmap in relation to schedules for other region-wide initiatives. The Secretariat acquiesced to a request for the Secretariat’s presentation of the roadmap to be distributed for the participants’ benefit. It was agreed that it would be too late to wait until 2016 before implementing projects under the new SAP BIO. Chair reassured participants that, until the revised SAP BIO was adopted, RAC/SPA would continue to implement the existing Programme, making occasional adjustments in accordance with countries’ revised priorities and other factors such as the Aichi strategy or the ecosystem approach. Consequently, there would be no gap or vacuum between adoption of the new Programme and its implementation.

The Secretariat stressed that it was indispensable to hold thorough consultations of all Parties and partners. That could be achieved through more meetings or by videoconferencing. Bilateral meetings would also be held in order to take on board the demands and needs of each Party and partner. Since the next UNEP/MAP CoP was due at the end of 2013, the deadline for finalizing the review of SAP BIO was effectively the previous meeting of RAC/SPA focal points scheduled for June 2013. If the new SAP BIO was finalized in time, it could be proposed for adoption at the 2013 CoP; otherwise, the latest version would be presented for information only. In any case, the calendar for the revision of SAP BIO would have to be worked out in conjunction with the countries. Often the national correspondents were the same people as the RAC/SPA focal points, which would facilitate and accelerate the decision-making process but the situation would not become clear until the Third Meeting of National Correspondents. It was recalled that SAP BIO was a general framework for RAC/SPA’s activities and priorities and that it could evolve over time. Due diligence was needed when priorities were set and action should not be left until the last minute. However, RAC/SPA already had an approved programme for 2012-2013, so it would continue to operate. While periodical adjustments were the right approach, a revised SAP BIO should be aimed for by the end of 2013.

Agenda item 8 - Any other matters

No other matters were discussed.

Agenda item 9 - Closure of the Meeting

In accordance with the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee, the final Report of the Meeting (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.370/3) was jointly finalized after the Meeting by the Rapporteur, the Chairperson and the RAC/SPA Secretariat.

Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the Meeting was closed on Wednesday, 4 July 2012 at 1.05 p.m.

ANNEX I: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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