



UNITED
NATIONS

EP

UNEP/MED WG.548/4



UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

17 April 2023
Original: English

Sixteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

Malta, 22-24 May 2023

Agenda Item 4: Progress report on the activities carried out to implement SPA/RAC activities under the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work for the biennium 2022-2023

Progress report on the implementation of SPA/RAC activities under the UNEP/MAP MTS for the interim period: April 2021-April 2023

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Progress report on the implementation of SPA/RAC activities under the UNEP/MAP MTS for the interim period: April 2021-April 2023

I. MTS Programme 2. Towards Healthy Mediterranean Ecosystems and Enhanced Biodiversity

Outcome 2.1. Ecosystem resilience improved through restoration of those with best regeneration potential.

Main activity 2.1.1. Promote the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in the Mediterranean: Identify innovative actions, capitalize and promote replication

1. A restoration programme of *Pinna nobilis* was developed, discussed and endorsed during a regional workshop¹ organized in Tunis on 20 and 21 June 2022.
2. Two training sessions were organized, one regional² from 28 to 30 June 2022 in Kerkennah Islands, Tunisia, and the second from 12 to 16 December 2022, in Trieste, Italy, targeting the Tunisian team designated to monitor living specimens of *Pinna nobilis*.
3. The draft restoration programme of *Pinna nobilis* is presented as a working document to the consideration of the 16th SPA/BD Focal Points' meeting in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 23 for adoption.
4. A "5 Seas Cooperation for Ecosystem Restoration Project" is being developed under the lead of the UNEP Europe Office and with the involvement of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat along with its regional activity centers: SPA/RAC, PAP/RAC and Plan Bleu and aimed to be submitted to relevant donors.
5. A side event³ entitled "Restoration of Ecosystem in the Mediterranean: is it a key tool to limit or reverse the progress of climate change impacts?" was organized on 16 November 2022, during the UNFCCC COP 27 within the Mediterranean Pavilion.
6. A call for consultancy is being launched to elaborate a state-of-the-art document on marine and coastal biodiversity restoration, lessons learned. This report will be ready during the last quarter of 2023.

Outcome 2.2. Comprehensive, coherent Mediterranean network of well-managed MPAs and OECMs in place, expanded, effective and sustainable

Main activity 2.2.1. Enhance the designation and connectivity of different area-based conservation measures, including in ABNJ

7. The 2019 edition of the MAPAMED database, as validated by the SPA/BD Focal Points, was published online and launched during a webinar organized on 22 April 2021, by SPA/RAC and MedPAN.
8. The MAPAMED data served for the elaboration and dissemination of poster entitled "The system of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas in 2020" showing the MPA coverage by country and at regional level. MAPAMED data is being compiled and analyzed into the 2020 Mediterranean Status Report. The draft report is being peer-reviewed and will be edited in 2023.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leWZik1x0cs> & <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kA3oeshp0c&t=3s>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Co2YblbftMQ>

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsSa0t4T35E>

9. In the framework of the Joint Cooperation Strategy on Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity Among the Secretariats of ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-Med and UNEP/MAP, online discussions and exchanges, facilitated by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat took place in 2021, with the contribution and technical support of SPA/RAC. The exchanges agreed that the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA and the “Transboundary Corridor for Vulnerable Megafauna in Western Mediterranean” (TCVM) provide solid ground for identifying possible avenues for concrete collaboration on the establishment of spatial-based protection and management measures to protect the marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean region. Elaborating joint project proposals for funding, touching on different aspects related to the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA and TCVM or a joint letter addressed from the Secretariats to countries concerned by both areas were considered as next steps.

10. A Partner collaboration workshop celebrated in Dubrovnik, Croatia, from 31 May to 1 July 2022 on the conservation of the South Adriatic Ionian Strait (SAIS) EBSA through diverse area-based effective conservation measures, including the development of an action plan for that area, which was discussed by the SAIS EBSA management development partners and attended by SPA/RAC representatives.

11. A study aiming at assessing the objectives and complementarities among different area-based conservation measures and developing recommendations for new designations to enhance their connectivity and effectiveness will be launched by SPA/RAC in June 2023. The study is aimed to be presented at a workshop on OECMs planned for the second semester of 2023.

Main activity 2.2.2. Design and implement national measures to boost marine protected areas (MPAs) in the region

12. Within the framework of the EU-funded IMAP-MPA project, SPA/RAC has been jointly collaborating, since July 2022, with the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency in the development of a National MCPAs/OECMs Strategy for the Mediterranean Egyptian Coast. The draft national strategy is being produced considering both conservation objectives and the requirement for MPAs to be integrated within their economic and social environment, based on a consultation process involving related stakeholders at national and local levels. It will be discussed during a consultation workshop with relevant stakeholders on the beginning of June 2023.

13. Under the GEF Child Project 3.1 in Libya, SPA/RAC and the Ministry of Environment collaborated in developing a draft law on protected areas that has been endorsed by the national stakeholders and adapted and tailored by the legislative department of the Ministry of Environment to the appropriate format and channeled then through the official procedures of the government and submitted to the parliament for adoption by 2023.

14. On the other hand, under the same Project, SPA/RAC and the Ministry of Environment of Libya are currently revising the terms of reference in view of launching in May 2023 a call for consultants to update the National Strategy on MCPAs in line with the global and Mediterranean agendas and targets including the identification and reporting of OECMs.

15. With the support of the EU-funded IMAP-MPA project, SPA/RAC developed a regional capacity building programme for improving Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas (MPA) management and ensuring their sustainability, focusing on main following topics: management effectiveness, sustainable financing and the socio-economic value of MPAs. In this context, two training courses were organized, followed by post-training implementation activities:

- A first training course on “MPA effective management and sustainable financing” (videoconference, 10 - 14 February 2022); 26 participants from 6 countries (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia) joined the online training developed and delivered by 4 women trainers, and
- A second training course on “Socio-economic Sustainability of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas” (Gokova, Dalaman, Türkiye, 14-18 November 2022); 22 participants from 7 countries (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Türkiye) joined the training developed and delivered by 4 women trainers.

16. SPA/RAC convened the Third meeting of the Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) on 1 March 2022, by teleconference. The meeting provided guidance on (i) the development of the evaluation and monitoring framework for the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and OECMs in the Mediterranean, (ii) the implementing of the Post-2020 Regional Strategy, and (iii) the implementing of the OECM strategic pillar. It also agreed on the Programme of Work of AGEM for the period 2022-2023.

17. Following the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its related Monitoring framework, AGEM experts supported SPA/RAC in developing a draft Evaluation and Monitoring framework for the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean, to be submitted to the 16th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points. The draft framework was discussed by dedicated working group formed by AGEM voluntary members that met online on 31 March and 5 April 2023.

18. Within the framework of the MAVA-funded NTZ/MPA project, SPA/RAC has developed participatory management plans for several protected areas, including the Al Hoceima National Park in Morocco, the Kuriat Islands future Marine and Coastal Protected Area (MCPA) in Tunisia, the Foça Special Environmental Protection Area (SEPA) in Türkiye, and the Rachgoun Island future MPA in Algeria. These plans aim to reduce the impact of fishing activities on species and habitats, building upon the results of the MAVA-funded MedKeyHabitats I and II projects.

19. Within the framework of the MAVA-funded NTZ/MPA project, SPA/RAC has conducted a strategic study to identify sustainable funding sources for protected areas in Tunisia, particularly for the Kuriat MCPA. The study has identified 13 potential sources and mechanisms of sustainable funding, and the legal tools for their implementation have been defined.

20. Under the EU-funded IMAP-MPA project, SPA/RAC is supporting the relevant national authorities of Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia in developing and/or updating and implementing the management plans of Rachgoun Island future MPA (Algeria), Tyre Coast Nature Reserve (Lebanon), Shash MPA (Libya), Jbel Moussa future MPA (Morocco) and Kerkennah Islands future MCPA (Tunisia). This support includes several types of activities covering local stakeholders' engagement, improving effective management, surveillance, monitoring, ensuring sustainable financing, communication, awareness-raising, capacity-building, networking and exchange of experience and best practices. Activity is planned to start from May 2023.

Main activity 2.2.3. Ensure effective SPAMI management and evaluation

21. Following a decision by COP 21, SPA/RAC has developed the adopted "Updated Format for the periodic review of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs)" into an online bilingual "SPAMI Evaluation System". The SPAMI Evaluation System was tested during the 2022-2023 SPAMI ordinary review and feedback was provided by the evaluation teams to SPA/RAC.

22. The SPA/BD or MAP Focal Points of Albania, Algeria, France and Italy were contacted early 2023 in order to launch the SPAMI ordinary reviews of the five concerned SPAMIs: Karaburun Sazan National Marine Park (Albania), Banc des Kabyles Marine Reserve (Algeria), Habibas Islands (Algeria), Calanques National Park (France), and Portofino Marine Protected Area (Italy). Mixed national-independent Technical Advisory Commissions were established by the national authorities and SPA/RAC, and evaluation processes were run for the concerned SPAMIs during March and April 2023, except for the Albanian SPAMI, for which SPA/RAC calls to appoint the necessary team (including a national SPA/BD Focal Point) remained unanswered. Consequently, only the outcomes of the ordinary reviews of Algerian, French and Italian SPAMIs will be presented for consideration by the 16th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points.

23. The SPAMI Twinning Programme is implemented to develop and strengthen an effective management of marine protected areas and particularly SPAMIs in the framework of ENI CBC Med ENSERES Project. It

includes management problems' diagnosis reports, on-the-job training and peer-to-peer support in agreed SPAMI-city areas: Tyre Coast Nature Reserve (Lebanon)/Medes Islands Reserve (Spain); and Kneiss Islands Nature Reserve (Tunisia)/Côte Bleue Marine Park (France).

24. After definition of specific contents of each twinning, two exchange visits were organized as follows:
- Tyre Coast Nature Reserve and SPAMI, June 2022: Two representatives from Medes Islands Reserve (Spain) exchanged best practices with SPAMI managers and local stakeholders.
 - Kneiss Islands Nature Reserve and SPAMI, August/September 2022: Two representatives from the Parc Marin de la Côte Bleue (France) exchanged best practices with SPAMI managers and local stakeholders.
25. Two on-the-job trainings were organized in Spain and France as follows:
- On-the-job training of four Tyre Coast nature reserve SPAMI managers to Montgrí, Medes Islands and Baix Ter Natural SPAMI, Spain, aiming to showcase sustainable management of tourism activity related to the park from 9 to 14 October 2022.
 - On-the-Job training of six Kneiss islands SPAMI managers to Côte Bleue Marine Park, France, aiming at showcasing fishery sustainable management, from 19 to 22 October 2022.
26. In order to involve local civil society in SPAMI management, six (6) small grants were awarded to 2 NOGs from Tunisia and four NGOs from Lebanon. The projects are being implemented in Kneiss Island Nature Reserve SPAMI (Tunisia) and Tyre Coast Nature Reserve SPAMI (Lebanon) in the framework of the ENI CBC Med ENSERES project.
27. Consultation for the designation of a specialized firm to maintain and improve the SPAMI Collaborative Platform is launched in April 2023.

Outcome 2.3. Mediterranean endangered and threatened species and key habitats in favorable status of conservation

28. During the reporting period, SPA/RAC will sign in the coming weeks a new financing agreement (external funds) focusing on the implementation of the 2022-2023 and 2024-2025: The Global Environment Facility (GEF) “Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean (FishEBM MED)” project. The main objective of the project is to reverse the over-exploitation of select commercial living marine resources in the Mediterranean by enhancing the capacity of Mediterranean countries to manage fisheries. Further detail on the project are presented in the information document WG.548/Inf.3.

Main activity 2.3.1. Implement regional and national actions to boost the implementation of the Action Plans on marine key habitats

29. The symposia⁴ on marine key habitats and NIS were organised in Genova, Italy from 19 to 23 September 2022 thanks to the collaboration of the Italian government and the university of Genova. The Symposia as a hybrid event was attended by more than 150 participants and where 148 communications were presented (66 oral communications and 82 poster presentations). The proceedings of the symposia on marine key habitats (Genova, Italy 19-23 September 2022), including the conclusions and recommendations are available on the symposia and the SPA/RAC websites⁵.

30. A data collection methodology on Posidonia meadows, coralligenous and cave habitats has been elaborated and adopted and an inventory of all the spatial information available and accessible at Mediterranean level and at national level was undertaken. The collection of available data and its aggregation following established criteria (scale, habitat types following the updated Reference List of Marine Habitat

⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kgr2_Js3ngg&t=2s

⁵ <https://symposia.spa-rac.org> & <https://www.spa-rac.org/publications>

Types for the Selection of Sites to be Included in the National Inventories of Natural Sites of Conservation Interest in the Mediterranean) was finalised. A national consultation will be organized soon to get feedback from the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and to validate the data. The Production of the distribution maps of Posidonia meadows, coralligenous and cave habitats will be ready and available on the Mediterranean biodiversity platform by the end of 2023. A paper on the elaboration and available maps and the distribution of the marine key habitats is being prepared to be submitted to peer journal.

31. A multidisciplinary group of experts has been established through the designation by the Contracting Parties of national experts with experience in phytoplankton, zooplankton and oceanography (Hydrology, Chlorophyll-a, etc.). The group met on the 5th of April to define parameters allowing to use phytoplankton and zooplankton for relevant IMAP biodiversity indicators and elaborate the List of Reference of Pelagic Habitat Types in the Mediterranean Sea so that it can be used, where necessary, as a basis for identifying reference pelagic habitats to be monitored and assessed at the national level under the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria. The draft report of the online meeting with the conclusions and recommendations is presented as working documents to the 16th SPA/BD Focal Points meeting in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 23 for consideration.

32. The call for consultancy for the desk studies of the most important marine caves to be studied in Tunisia and Morocco will be disseminated during May 2022 and the studies are planned to be ready by September 2023.

33. A training will be organised during the summer 2023 (end of June) in collaboration with ATUTAX NGO. It will be organised back-to-back with a workshop to discuss progress towards common monitoring methods that could be considered for caves, including modern technologies.

34. A contract was signed with the institute of marine biology (Montenegro) to contribute to the implementation of IMAP through the execution of the national monitoring programme in MPAs including the site concerned by the Medkeyhabitats I6 project (Platamuni, MPA and Ratac). The final report including all georeferenced collected data is expected by the end of 2023.

35. For Tunisia and following a discussion with the focal point, two contracts will be signed with two NGOs:

- with “Méditerranée Action Nature” (MAN) to establish a monitoring point for Posidonia meadows in La Galite MCPA and to revisit the monitoring point in Cap Negro – Cap Serrat Site (Medkeyhabitats I). Activities will be implemented in June 2023.
- with “Notre Grand Bleu” (NGB) to revisit the monitoring points of Posidonia meadows. Contract is under finalization. Activities will be implemented in June 2023.

36. SPA/RAC implemented the activity related “Marine habitats and marine protected area” within Coastal Area Management Programme (CAMP) for Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) and deliverables will be available during May 2023. The main goal of the sub-activity is to prepare a document / report: “Marine species and habitats in the territorial waters of BH, issues, monitoring, protection and future financing”.

Main activity 2.3.2. Effectively implement the updated regional Strategy and Action Plans for the conservation of threatened and endangered species

37. The updated Regional Action Plan on seabirds listed in Annex II to SPA/BD protocol and its implementation assessment are elaborated and presented as Working Document to the 16th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points, in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 23 for consideration.

⁶ <https://www.rac-spa.org/publications#enmedkey>

38. The Mid-term evaluation of the Monk seal regional strategy implementation in the Mediterranean has been elaborated and is presented as Working Document to the 16th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points, which is invited to take note of this report.
39. Following the compilation of the preparatory phase, the Monk seal Alliance approved the full project proposal “Med-Monk Seal” project: Enhancing knowledge and awareness on monk seal in the Mediterranean” in December 2022. The overall objective of the Project is to support the Contracting Parties of the south Mediterranean countries to implement the Priority Goals stated in the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Mediterranean Monk Seal.
40. As project coordinator, SPA/RAC has made the followed up of harmonized different activities and ensured that the MAVA Marine turtle funded project results contribute to the implementation of the Mediterranean Marine turtle Action Plan, of the Post-2020 SAP-BIO, of EcAp/IMAP and any other relevant national/regional initiatives. In this respect, SPA/RAC has supported: (i) the “Monitoring of known sites and new sporadic Marine turtles nesting sites”, in Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia during 2021 / 2022, and (ii) the elaboration of the National Action plans in Morocco and Algeria; (iii) the organisation of the fourth Mediterranean conference on Marine turtles (Tetouan, Morocco, 18-21 October 2022)
41. More details on the results and outputs of the project are given in the Information Document “MAVA Marine turtles Project: Final EvaluationAs Partner to the EU funded QUIETMED 2 project, SPA/RAC contributed to: (i) the elaboration of its deliverables 2 and 4 which are respectively the “Setting of EU Threshold Values for impulsive underwater sound – recommendations from the Technical Group on Underwater noise” and the “Background document: executive summary of TG Noise; recommendations for EU threshold values for impulsive and continuous underwater sound” (ii) The organization, in collaboration with ACCOBAMS, of 2-day training on Data reporting/Data Call, tools developed, use of collected noise data , held back-to-back to the Summit on the underwater noise management latest updates (Fuente Álamo (Spain) 14th – 16th March 2023).
42. Within the 2nd phase of the EU funded Marine Litter MED project, SPA/RAC supported the implementation of the national monitoring programme of CI 24 in Lebanon and Tunisia, as well as the elaboration, in close consultation with MEEdPol and INFO/RAC, of Data Standards (DS) and Data Dictionaries (DD) for IMAP Ecological Objective 10 (EO10) Common Indicator 24 (Ingestion and Entanglement on Marine Turtles), presented as information document during this meeting.
43. After more than three years, SPA/RAC has successfully completed the pilot action “Dolphin and interactions with purse seine small-pelagic fisheries in Kelibia, Tunisia”, implemented by INSTM and INAT within the MAVA funded project “Mitigating dolphin depredation in Mediterranean fisheries – Joining efforts for strengthening cetacean conservation and sustainable fisheries” coordinated by ACCOBAMS and GFCM Secretariats.
44. Within the MAVA MedBycatch project-phase 2 (July 2020-October 2022, implemented in Croatia, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and Türkiye), SPA/RAC provided support for the harmonization and interconnection between the Post-2020 SAPBIO and the 2030 GFCM Mediterranean and Black Sea Fishery and aquaculture strategy to ensure that both are tackling the mitigation of the incidental catches of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean. Additionally, SPA/RAC ensured the dissemination and use of the standardized protocol “Monitoring incidental catch of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea - Methodology for data collection” elaborated by FAO/GFCM in close collaboration with SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, IUCN Med, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia and MEDASSET. Within this framework, SPA/RAC coordinated with FAO/GFCM ACCOBAMS, IUCN Med, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, MEDASSET and WWF for the harmonization of the bycatch data collection programmes and bycatch data analysis as well as bycatch mitigation measures trials in Croatia, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and Türkiye. On 31 January 2022, The bycatch data collection programme, implemented in Tunisia by SPA/RAC in collaboration with Tunisian partners (INSTM, DGPAq, AAO/BirdLife in Tunisia, WWF NA and the Ministry of Environment), has been successfully completed as well as the bycatch mitigation trials, targeting mainly sea turtles and cartilaginous fishes (Trawlers, longline and gillnets). A National Report was elaborated in July 2022 and includes both data

collection and mitigation trials data analysis. Further details are presented in the information document WG.548/Inf.4.

45. Within the framework of the MAVA Marine turtle funded project, SPA/RAC supported the setup of national sea turtles stranding in Egypt, Libya and Morocco and its reinforcement in Lebanon and Algeria, since the set up was conducted within the EU funded Med Marine Litter Project in 2019 as well as the National stranding Network in Tunisia.

46. In addition, a sub-regional training on marine turtle rescue and networking has been organised by SPA/RAC at the Lampedusa Turtle Rescue Centre from 15 to 19 November 2021. Lectures and practical sessions on onboard first aid, sampling techniques, turtle rescue surgery and necropsy have been delivered to 10 Marine turtle specialists and veterinarians from Tunisia (04) , Libya (02), Egypt (02) and Lebanon (02).

47. With reference to the bilateral Cooperation Agreement signed between UNEP/MAP and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security to implement the MAP Programme of Work (PoW 2022-2023) a sea turtles rescue centre twinning programme has been launched as follows: Albania-Italy/ Libya-Tunisia/ Lebanon-France. The programme mainly includes exchange visits between the rescue centres staff to improve their scientific and technical knowledge as well as logistical measures. A first exchange visit took place from 11 to 12 April 2023 at la Grande Motte in France, between the French Centre for the Study and Protection of Mediterranean Sea Turtles (CEST Med) and the sea turtles rescue centre of the SPAMI Tyre Natural Reserve (Lebanon). With this regard, a review of available data on marine turtles stranding in the Mediterranean is under preparation.

48. Within the implementation “strategy 5: Reduce illegal trade of marine turtle in Tunisia” of the Marine turtles phase 1, the Medbycatch and the NTZ projects, SPA/RAC signed an agreement with “Agence de vulgarisation et de formation Agricole, AVFA” that is acting under the Ministry of agriculture and fisheries to implement an awareness and training programmes tackling the bycatch, the conservation of marine turtles, the protection of vulnerable areas. These programmes were provided by the AVFA trainers to the fishing guards, fishers and decisions makers.

49. SPA/RAC supported the NGO, Notre Grand Bleu during 2021, as member of the Kuriat Islands management Unit to undertake awareness raising actions for fishermen, local community and all relevant stakeholders for effective management activities and to assess the implementation of the charter of touristic activities and the communication strategy prepared in 2019-2020 within the MAVA funded Kuriat Project.

50. The two following studies have been elaborated within the MAVA Marine Turtles’ project: “The Sustainable Monitoring post 2022 scheme in Coastal Nature Reserve of Tyre” focusing on the work with hoteliers and coastal businesses to ensure best practices to minimise disturbance at night and promote turtle ecotourism activities. “The sustainable monitoring schemes of marine turtles in Sirte & Farwa coastline (Libya) including awareness activities”.

51. Within the MAVA NTZ/MPA Project, the SPA/RAC has completed surveillance strategies to stop or mitigate illegal fishing activities on sensitive marine habitats in the Al Hoceima National Park in Morocco, the Kuriat Islands future Marine and Coastal Protected Area (MCPA) in Tunisia, and the Foça Special Environmental Protection Area (SEPA) in Türkiye. These strategies have been endorsed by local authorities.

Main activity 2.3.3. Implement conservation measures and share best practices related to threatened and endangered species listed in Annex II to SPA/BD Protocol (in-house expertise, consultancy, regional, sub- regional and national trainings, workshops and regional other events)

52. The results of the Bycatch Monitoring programme as well as the results of the bycatch mitigation measures and best practices from the MedBycatch project were shared during the following International events : Know-how Webinar “Monitoring Bycatch of Vulnerable Marine Species and Dolphin Depredation” co-organized with IUCN Med (16 May 2022), the BirdLife Ocean Week (Brussels on 14 June 2022), online

Workshop on collaboration with fishers (26th July 2022), the GFCM Working Group on Fishing Technology (Online, 27 - 28 September 2022), the MedBycatch project final meeting held in Malaga (3 October 2022), the International Bycatch meeting (Malaga (4 to 6 October 2022), the 7th Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles (Tetouan, Morocco, 18-21 October 2022), the 4th Colloque on Sea Turtles France Group (La Grande Motte, France, 18 November 2022), the 45th session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, GFCM (Tirana, Albania, 7-11 November 2022). and the GFCM Subregional Committee for the central Mediterranean (Tunis, Tunisia, 28 to 30 March 2023).

53. The main findings and lessons learnt of the MAVA Marine turtles project has been presented during the MAVA Fair held on 4-5 July 2022 in Tunis, Tunisia; Mediterranean MPA Forum (Monaco, November 2021); the 7th Mediterranean conference on Marine Turtles (Oral communication ,18-21 October 2022 Tetouan, Morocco), and during the international Symposium on Marine Turtles (Poster, Cartagena, Colombia, 22-24 March 2023).

54. The results and main outputs of the pilot action "Dolphin and interactions with purse seine small-pelagic fisheries in Kelibia, Tunisia has been presented during the Second exchange workshop of the MAVA Depredation2 project, held in Catania, Sicily, 8-10 June 2022 and during the International Bycatch meeting (Malaga (4 to 6 October 2022) and the MOP 9 of ACCOBAMS.

55. To promote the development of ecotourism activities that reconcile the conservation of endangered marine species and the practice of fishing (pescaturism activities, discovery of the marine environment and observation of marine fauna according to responsible principles and practices), SPA/RAC supported the organization of a related pilot pestcatourism action, implemented by the ONG NGB in Monastir Bay on 29 of My 2022.

56. SPA/RAC contributed with MEDASSET and INFO/RAC to the organization of workshop "pan-Mediterranean stranding protocol & database within the 7th Mediterranean conference on Marine turtles on 19/ October 2023.

57. Within the MedBycatch project phase 2, all the data collected within the national Bycatch data collection programme implemented in Tunisia was uploaded by the National Bycatch Focal points into the regional bycatch database hosted by GFCM.

58. In order to reinforce national capacity on seabird monitoring, SPA/RAC contributed to the organization of the bird winter census implemented by the AAO (BirdLife Partner in Tunisia), and Tour du Valat, in a training format where participants from Mediterranean countries took part. Moreover, SPA/RAC has supported the bird winter census implemented by Libyan Society for Birds under the coordination of the Ministry of Environment during January -February 2023 and in line with the IMAP national Monitoring programme.

59. SPA/RAC has joined the INTERMED Project and has coordinated, in synergy with IMAP process, the species distributional range (CI3) of cetacean species in the Northern Tunisian coast including the MPA of ZEMBRA, the higher-pressure area of the Gulf of Tunis and the gulf of Hammamet.

60. Within the framework of the MAVA MedByatch, NTZ/MPA and Marine Turtles projects SPA/RAC provided support to the Agricultural Extension and Training Agency (AVFA) in Tunisia to include bycatch topic as a module within several fishing schools in Tunisia; several fishers have benefited and will continue to benefit from it. Within this context, in partnership with the Agriculture Extension and Training Agency (AVFA) and AAO/BirdLife in Tunisia, trainings on bycatch and sea turtle issues and onboard security were provided to several fishers in Kerkennah archipelago (Tunisia, 20 October 2022) and within several fishing schools in Tunisia (69 fishers got a certification from AVFA). Moreover, SPA/RAC supported the participation of a Tunisian MedBycatch observer to an onboard training course for scientific fisheries observers organized by the International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) through the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza (CIHEAM Zaragoza) in collaboration with GFCM (Alicante, Spain, 3-7 October 2022)

61. Within the framework of the MAVA funded Project “Support mechanism for filling key knowledge gaps for vulnerable species (marine mammals, seabirds, sea turtles and elasmobranchs) impacted by fisheries in selected areas of the Mediterranean » coordinated by SPA/RAC in collaboration with ACCOBAMS, BirdLife Int., IUCN-Med, MEDASSET, a final workshop has been organised in Izmir (Türkiye) 28-29 July 2022, where the Analysis and Interpretation of the project data collected through eight small initiatives has been presented by the project national partners. The Biannual cetacean conference for the south Mediterranean countries is planned for the last quarter of 2023.

62. The Symposium on Med chondrichthyans Fishes is planned for the last quarter of 2023.

Outcome 2.4. Non-indigenous species introductions minimized and introduction pathways under control

Main activity 2.4.1. Update and implement the regional action plan on Non-Indigenous species (NIS) and species introductions, as well as targeted measures of the Mediterranean Strategy on Ships’ Ballast Water Management and Action Plan

63. The assessment and the updating of the Regional Action Plan on non-indigenous species and species introduction are elaborated and are presented as working document to the 16th meeting Focal Point in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 23 for consideration. The updating took into consideration the Ballast water management strategy for the Mediterranean Sea (2022-2027).

64. The call for consultancy for the elaboration of Guidelines for controlling the vectors of introduction into the Mediterranean of NIS and invasive marine species and Guide for risk analysis assessing the impacts of the introduction of NIS updated taking into account the Mediterranean BWM, reviewed by REMPEC, will be relaunched during May 2022. The updating should be finalised by the end of 2023

65. Following the Pilot Study, supported by the EcAp-MED II, EU-financed project, and jointly implemented with the GFCM and UN Environment/MAP, that led to elaboration of pilot sub-regional monitoring plan on NIS/Fisheries for the eastern sub-region, SPA/RAC will develop a Sub-regional Action Plan on non-indigenous species and species introduction for the eastern sub-region in collaboration with GFCM Secretariat and IUCN-Med. A preparatory online meeting will be organised to coordinate the implementation of this activity taking into account the GFCM research programme to advance on NIS interactions with fisheries in Eastern Mediterranean. The Sub-regional Action Plan on non-indigenous species and species introduction will be ready by the end of 2023.

66. Egypt and Libya have proposed activities which are under finalization, along the following lines:

- Libya - Awareness days on blue crab to be organised during the summer of 2023. The activity will be organised, after consultation with the Libyan focal point, with Libyan Society for Artisanal Fishery Friend (LSAFF).
- Study of buffer fish in Egypt: the study will be implemented during summer 2023 by the Arab Union for Sustainable Development and the Environment (AUSDE) after consultation t with national SPA/BD focal point.

67. MAMIAS web application is planned to be deployed on the SPA/RAC production server during summer 2023 in order to be tested with selected user before its official release and use during planned national training on data collection on NIS within the new GEF FISHEBM Med project.

II. MTS Programme 5: Governance (Foundational Programme)

Outcome 5.2. Systemic strengthening and effective functioning and delivery of MAP decision-making and advisory bodies ensured, and efficiency enhanced with new digital approaches .

Main activity 5.2.5. Strengthen the MAP result-based programmatic framework including gender mainstreaming and sustainability of operations (in- house expertise, consultancy, MAP Task Force meetings, regional and international meetings)

68. The Donor Conference for Biodiversity and Area-based Conservation in the Mediterranean was held on 16 March 2023, in Paris (France). The conference gathered key donors and funding agencies in a roundtable and included the presentation of a four projects' portfolio. Since the project portfolio aims at implementing the Post-2020 SAPBIO and Post-2020 Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs, an overview of their content (outcomes, outputs, targets, implementation plans, concerned countries and budget estimate were presented to potential donors. The report of the conference as well as the report of the advisory committee meeting and the resource mobilisation strategy document are presented as information documents to the 16th Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points.

Main activity 5.2.7. Organize SAPBIO correspondent meetings

69. Several exchanges on the Resource Mobilisation Strategy elaboration process were made with the SAPBIO National Correspondents since early 2022. The 9th SAPBIO National Correspondents' Meeting was held on 24 February 2023 in Barcelona (Spain) in order to inform the Contracting Parties on the Draft Resource Mobilization Strategy process and to consult them and have the involvement in the projects' portfolio preparation. The report of the meeting is presented as an information document to the 16th Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points.

Outcome 5.3. Policy coherence and complementarity ensured among relevant work at global, regional and national levels and among MAP-Barcelona Convention system's policy and regulatory instruments

Main activity 5.3.2. Maximize synergies with Post 2020 Global agenda for the implementation of SAPBIO

70. SPA/RAC participated in the 15th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal, Canada, 7-19 December 2022.

71. SPA/RAC and its partners contributed the CBD COP 15, by setting up a booth (The Mediterranean Corner) at the conference exhibition area, that aims to:

- showcase solutions for effective biodiversity conservation from the Mediterranean, especially those linked to marine protected areas, and
- discuss present and future strategies and actions to support the GBF goals and targets.

72. This initiative was joined by the following technical and financial partners:

- *Technical partners:* UNEP/MAP, SPA/RAC, INFO/RAC, PAMEX & PLIFF, ACCOBAMS, CEPF & BirdLife, FM6E, FPA2, MBPC (represented by ETC-UMA), MedPAN, The MedFund, together for the Med (represented by BlueSeeds and IUCN-Med), and UfM.
- *Financial partners:* UNEP/MAP - SPA/RAC, EU (through the IMAP-MPA project), Ministry of Environment and Energy Security of Italy, MBPC (represented by ETC-UMA), ACCOBAMS, and MedPAN.

73. The Mediterranean Corner hosted from 10 to 16 December 2022, 14 Talks for Nature of 10-15 minutes each, made by 20 speakers attending the COP or joining by videoconference. These talks presented experiences, projects and initiatives from Mediterranean organizations and stakeholders, including the

Barcelona Convention. They were moderated by SPA/RAC, INFO/RAC and MedPAN. The talks were broadcasted live on SPA/RAC YouTube channel (650 views) and shared on Facebook page (reach: 12,365), Twitter (reach: 4,485) and LinkedIn (reach: 5.818), along with information related to the topics covered, with the support of INFO/RAC.

74. The SPA/RAC participated in the 3rd Meeting of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue with Regional Sea Organizations (RSOs) and Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) (Busan, Republic of Korea, 25-28 October 2022) and presented joint UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC-GFCM collaboration activities and supported drafting a roadmap for the Mediterranean region.

75. SPA/RAC collaborated with 11 other environmental organizations for the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2021 to set up the Mediterranean Solutions stand (3-11 September 2021, Marseille). Several projects and programmes of SPA/RAC were presented and discussed during the Congress, including the Post-2020 SAPBIO, the regional MCPA & OECM strategy, IMAP related activities, MedBycatch project and the Mediterranean MPA Forum.

76. SPA/RAC participated in the fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (Vancouver, Canada, 3-9 February 2023). Through the events it organised and participated in, SPA/RAC highlighted some of the key approaches and actions needed to ensure effective conservation and management of 30% of the ocean by 2030 and beyond. Experiences from the IMAP/MPA and ENSERES projects and SPAMI Twinning programme were presented on this occasion.

77. SPA/RAC participated to the UNFCCC COP27 that took place in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt (November 2022) and contributed to several side events organised by Mediterranean countries and international/regional organisations. A side event entitled “Restoration of Ecosystem in the Mediterranean: is it a key tool to limit or reverse the progress of climate change impacts?” was organized on 16 November 2022, within the Mediterranean Pavilion.

78. SPA/RAC participated as well to the United Nation’s Ocean Summit (UNOC 2022) in Lisbon, July 2022. This high-level event was a good opportunity for SPA/RAC director to contribute as a speaker to several side events organised by UNEP/MAP jointly with Mediterranean countries and other regional organisations to showcase successful projects and initiatives related to the ocean protection in the Mediterranean.

Outcome 5.4. Enhanced partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagement, including with the private sector and science policy interface

Main activity 5.4.4. Promote the title of Partner to Regional Action Plan for the conservation of threatened species and marine key habitats "Regional Action Plans Partners"

79. As provided for in the Regional Action Plan for the conservation of threatened species and marine key habitats, SPA/RAC has prepared the criteria and procedure for admission as a Regional Action Plan Partner in line with the decision IG.19/61 “MAP/Civil Society cooperation and partnership”. The conditions and criteria for the award of the title of Regional Action Plan Partner are submitted as working document to the consideration of the 16th SPA/BD Focal Points’ meeting in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 23 for adoption.

80. SPA/RAC, MedPAN, WWF, the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and their partners have organized from 28 November to 1 December 2021, in Monaco and online, the third edition of the Forum of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Mediterranean. This event gathered more than 220 participants in person and more than 550 online and was the final steps of the process that started in October 2020 by a series of online consultations, aiming at developing a renewed momentum among regional MPA stakeholders in support to the Barcelona Convention’s Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean and the achievement of the global and regional marine conservation goals. A voluntary call for commitments was launched at the occasion of the Forum in Monaco to implement actions aiming at achieving

common goals in the region. A review mechanism for tracking progress of the commitments will be put in place, which will encourage relevant stakeholders to provide regular inputs, and thus help assessing the progress made.

Outcome 5.5. Coordinated approaches implemented to strengthen public institution capacities for the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols

81. In the framework of the resource mobilization strategy for the implementation of the Post-2020 SAPBIO, including the Post-2020 Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs, a portfolio of 4 projects was elaborated based on the priority actions within the 42 Actions of the Post-2020 SAPBIO and the 126 proposed actions of the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs. These projects are aimed to be implemented at the Mediterranean regional, sub-regional or multinational levels to assist Mediterranean countries to implement a first phase of the above-mentioned strategies. This Portfolio of projects is presented to the Donor Conference for Biodiversity and Area-based Conservation in the Mediterranean. The full projects were drafted based on donors-fitting, the Post-2020 SAPBIO priorities, funding modalities and requirements of the identified high potential donors. These four projects are:

- Project 1: Conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable blue economy as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Mediterranean through MCPAs and OECMs;
- Project 2: Recovering key Mediterranean marine and coastal habitats.
- Project 3: The Conservation of Marine Turtles in the Mediterranean Region: preserving ecosystem function & climate resiliency through enhanced marine turtle populations in the Mediterranean; and
- Project 4: Catalysing transformative action by governments and stakeholders to halt and reverse the loss in Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity.

82. The Donor Conference for Biodiversity and Area-based Conservation in the Mediterranean was held the 16 March 2023, in Paris (France). The conference gathered key donors and funding agencies in a roundtable and aimed at presenting the elaborated project portfolio. Since the project portfolio aims to implement the Post-2020 SAPBIO and Post-2020 Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs, an overview of the proposed outcomes, priority actions and implementation plan of the Post-2020 SAPBIO and Post-2020 Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs were also presented to potential donors. The report of the conference is presented as an information document to the 16th Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points.

83. As a follow-up of the Donor conference, bilateral meetings are being organized with donors to better discuss the projects' components that are of interest to their respective organisations and to adapt the project portfolio accordingly.

III.MTS Programme 6: Towards Monitoring, Assessment, Knowledge and Vision of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast for Informed Decision-Making

Outcome 6.2. Science-based IMAP, foresight and other assessments and assessment tools for strengthened science-policy interface and decision making

Main activity 6.2.1. Strengthen the implementation of national IMAP-based monitoring programmes for all clusters and deliver quality assured data

84. Within the framework of the EU-funded projects IMAP-MPA and EcAp-Med III, UNEP/MAP and SPA/RAC are supporting Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia to elaborate an integrated monitoring plan for biodiversity and pollution implemented in pilot monitoring sites (MPAs and in high pressure areas). Memoranda of agreements (MoAs) were signed with the national institutions designated by the Contracting Parties for IMAP implementation. Field work and data collection was finalized in Israel and Morocco and is ongoing in Egypt, Lebanon, Libya and Tunisia. Data submission of new and historical data into the IMAP info system is ongoing. These activities will be finalized by all the beneficiary countries by the end of June 2023 for the IMAP-MPA project and by the end of November 2023 for the EcAp-MED III.

85. SPA/RAC is supporting Montenegro to implement their national IMAP for biodiversity and NIS. MoA was signed with the Institute of marine biology in Montenegro which is the national institution identified by the Contracting Party. A complete monitoring plan for the field surveys of the selected CI in the selected monitoring sites in line with the national monitoring programme was prepared and agreed with the Institute. The upload of data collected in the framework of previous projects and initiatives into the IMAP Info System is ongoing. The fieldwork has already started. This activity will be finalized by December 2023.

86. SPA/RAC is assisting Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement their national IMAP for biodiversity. Official contacts have been made to identify the national institutional partners for the implementation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the monitoring of sea birds will be implemented, while in Foča SEPA in Türkiye, the monitoring of *Posidonia oceanica* meadows will be conducted. These activities will be finalized by December 2023.

Main activity 6.2.2. Upgrade the assessment component of IMAP including possible integrated assessment for all IMAP clusters: Focus on assessment criteria and thresholds (CI 1, 2, 6, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, CCI 25)

87. Monitoring and assessment scales, assessment criteria, thresholds and baseline values for the IMAP common indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to seabirds were discussed by the CORMON meeting on biodiversity and fisheries (28-29 March 2022) and were endorsed by the 9th EcAp Coordination Group meeting (videoconference, 5 July 2022) for its use for the purpose of the 2023 MED QSR.

88. An analysis of the implementation status of IMAP common indicators (CI1 and CI2) related to benthic habitats was elaborated to evaluate the possibility to propose monitoring and assessment scales, assessment criteria, thresholds and baseline values. This document was prepared with the support of the Biodiversity Online Working Group (OWG) on benthic habitats and was submitted to the CORMON meeting on biodiversity and fisheries (Athens, Greece, 9-10 March 2023) for review and consideration for the way forward in the new IMAP cycle to enhance the implementation of the monitoring and assessment of the benthic habitats towards achieving the Good Environmental Status (GES) in the Mediterranean Sea and coasts.

89. The process of the elaboration of a Mediterranean NIS baseline aimed to collect the available material on the presence of marine NIS in the Mediterranean countries in the form of existing national inventories, in collaboration with the Joint research centre (JRC) combine it with new and up-to-date information on new species records, the taxonomy and biogeography of the registered species and agreed methodological standards, in order to arrive at refined NIS baselines at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. The final outcome is the result of a collaborative process between national and regional experts, involving detailed exchange of information and the building of consensus on the final lists.

90. The national, sub-regional and regional NIS baselines were discussed with the experts of the OWG on NIS and reviewed by the CORMON meeting on biodiversity and fisheries (videoconference, 28-29 March 2022). Several comments were provided by the Contracting Parties and were included in the final version of the document that was endorsed by the 9th EcAp Coordination Group meeting (videoconference, 5 July 2022) for its use for the purpose of the 2023 MED QSR.

Main activity 6.2.3. Further develop IMAP Common Indicator

91. A desk review of available data sources, best practices and methodologies in the Mediterranean for the monitoring and assessment of seafloor damage was elaborated in the framework of the EcAp-Med III project. This study was used for the elaboration of the proposal on the Ecological Objective 6 on sea floor integrity.

92. The first draft of the EO6 proposal was delivered in September 2022 and was reviewed and discussed with the experts of the biodiversity Online Working Group on benthic habitats. The updated version was

discussed during the CORMON meeting on biodiversity and fisheries (Athens, Greece, 9-10 March 2023). This work is being developed with the support of the ABIOMMED project and the MASE funds.

93. Terms of References on the development of the Ecological Objective 4 on marine food webs were published. However, the call for consultancy was unsuccessful. To address the unsuccessful call for consultancy on Ecological Objective 4, SPA/RAC has reached out to the SPA/RAC focal points and requested a list of national experts who possess the necessary qualifications and expertise to complete the work required. This approach may help identify a wider pool of potential candidates for the consultancy.

Main activity 6.2.4. Deliver 2023 MED Quality Status Report (QSR)

94. As a contribution to the 2023 MED QSR biodiversity (EO1) and non-indigenous species (EO2) chapters, six thematic assessment reports for benthic habitats, cetaceans, Mediterranean monk seal, seabirds, marine turtles and non-indigenous species were developed and discussed by the CORMON meeting on biodiversity and fisheries (Athens, Greece, 9-10 March 2023). These chapters are being updated following the comments received from the Contracting Parties. The updated versions will be submitted to the forthcoming integrated CORMON meeting to be organized in Athens, Greece on 27 and 28 June 2023.

95. The assessment chapter for EO3 on fisheries is being developed by GFCM Secretariat. If available in time, the draft chapter will be circulated by email to the CORMON representatives, for review before its submission to the integrated CORMON meeting in June 2023.

Outcome 6.3. IMAP implementation and Environment and Development Observation provide updated and quality assured data in support of decision-making by Contracting Parties and assessment of GES

Main activity 6.3.13. Expand and improve the monitoring and forecasting capacities in the marine environment through integrating networks of observing and forecasting systems (oceanographic observatories) across the Mediterranean Sea

96. SPA/RAC started the implementation of the ILIAD Digital Twin of the Ocean project (consortium of 56 partners, Horizon Europe project) in February 2022. SPA/RAC implemented a mapping of key relevant policies and institutions in the EU and non-EU, nationally, regionally and internationally in the Mediterranean and other European seas. In addition, SPA/RAC assessed the capacity building needs of the ILIAD pilots and started developing a capacity building programme. In addition, a series of webinar related to ILIAD topics have started since January 2023. Further details are presented in the information document WG.548/Inf.5.

Main activity 6.3.14. Maintain Biodiversity databases as appropriate, regularly update databases content and elaborate operational strategy of marine biodiversity data management in line with the UNEP/MAP Data Management Policy

97. Data scheme of the SDF web Application elaborated and the annexes of the SDF updated with the new 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 and Annex II : List of endangered and threatened species. The functional prototype to be tested with the SDF already compiled will be undertaken during the last trimester of 2023.

98. MAMIAS web application is planned to be deployed on the SPA/RAC production server during summer 2023 in order to be tested with selected user before its official release and use during planned national training on data collection on NIS within the new GEF FISHEBM Med project.

99. Current MAPAMED data is online on the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform.

100. GIS Data updated and quality checked for data collected in several projects implemented by SP/RAC to be available on MBP by mid-2023:

- of marine Turtles in Tunisia, Libya, Lebanon, Egypt, Italy, and France.
- on marine spatial planning in Albania
- on Specially Protected Areas in the Mediterranean

101. Partnership will be established with data providers, to cover some data gaps, like EMODNET, COPERNICUS

102. Terms of reference for the preparation of a SPA/RAC Data Management policy withing the main data management policy of the UNEP MAP is being prepared.

IV.MTS Programme 7: For informed and consistent advocacy, awareness, education and communication (Enabling Programme)

Outcome 7.1. Stakeholders and policy makers properly informed about the state of the Mediterranean Sea and coast and aware of the environmental priority issues

Main activity 7.1.7. Celebrate the MAP Days in the Mediterranean Sea

103. The SPAMI Day, a day to celebrate the Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance and expand ocean conservation efforts, was set up by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention at their COP 22 (Antalya, Türkiye, 7-10 December 2021), and is officially celebrated around 15 April of each year.

104. In 2022, a special event was organized on 20 May 2022 in Monaco, by the SPA/RAC, the Permanent Secretariat of the Pelagos Agreement, in partnership with the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco. The event gathered Policy makers and SPAMI managers to celebrate the SPAMI Day. SPAMI certificates were delivered.

105. The second edition of SPAMI Day Celebration, taking place on 15 April 2023, was celebrated through various events and activities at the SPAMI level. The theme for this year's celebration is 'Co-management and Civil Society Participation', and it involves the participation of SPAMI management stakeholders and civil society organizations.

Outcome 7.2. Citizen and general public awareness and outreach raised through citizen science and digital campaigns

Main activity 7.2.2. Enhance public awareness and outreach on UN Days observance and their topics

106. A documentary film titled “salt in the eyes” was produced within the project Experiences and knowledge sharing funded by MAVA. The film aims to share learnings from the bycatch Observers’ Programme, while promoting the role of observers and fishers as part of the solution to the bycatch issue. The film was launched during the International Bycatch Meeting held in Malaga 4-6 October 2022 and was made available on the WaterBear platform.

107. A Milestone Documentary about Sea Turtles in the Mediterranean “My name is bleu” was filmed in four Mediterranean countries, with the support of the MAVA marine turtles project partners ([SPA/RAC](#)), [DEKAMER](#), [WWF Greece](#), [ARCHELON](#), [WWF Tunisia](#), [MedPAN](#), [National Marine Park of Zakynthos](#), [WWF Turkey](#) and [MEDASSET](#)). It has captured the interest of the international streaming platform, [WaterBear](#), whose content has an exclusively ecological stance and a worldwide audience.

108. A documentary film titled “Sentinels of the Mediterranean”, was produced as part of the Together for the Med initiative set up by MAVA. The documentary is currently being presented at international environmental film festivals and was featured in Oceanographic magazine.

109. Several reportages (National GEO, CNN et DW) have been filmed in Tunisia with support from SPA/RAC to showcase the solutions being developed on the bycatch issue for a more sustainable fishery. The CNN Greece reportage won the first prize as “Best International Reportage”.

110. SPA/RAC collaborated with IFM radio, one of the most listened-to radios in Tunisia, to produce 6 episodes of the ecological program “Univers Marin”, focusing on the conservation of marine biodiversity in Tunisia and the Mediterranean.

111. In July-August 2022, a scientific and technological immersion camp was organized in Kerkennah for 53 children aged 9 to 13, with financial and technical support from the IMAP-MPA project. The camp aimed to raise awareness and promote nature protection through observation, analysis, and collaboration among young people. The event also involved young people from Kerkennah in the EU-funded project to create a future MCPA in the islands. Tunisian press covered the event with articles and interviews, and a video of the camp activities was produced by SPA/RAC and Youth For Science Foundation, shared on social media with the hashtag #BiodiversityYouthCamp.

112. Several workshops and scientific events have been streamed online, including the Mediterranean Symposia on marine vegetation, coralligenous, dark habitats and non-indigenous species and The Mediterranean Corner initiative at CBD COP15.

113. From July to December 2022, film screenings and debates on environmental issues were organized in Tunisia as part of the EnviroFest Environmental Film Festival, attracting around 4,000 spectators annually. The activity was supported by MAVA-funded projects MedKeyHabitats II, MedBycatch, Turtles, and the EU-funded IMAP-MPA project.

114. Within The MAVA funded MedBycatch project, , , the fisher, Mr. Fahmi Ben Mustapha, who collaborated with SPA/RAC, Association "Les Amis des Oiseaux" (AAO), and WWF Tunisia to collect data on bycatch in Tunisia, resolved to continue the work to reduce bycatch after the project's end. In March 2023, he removed all shark-targeted fishing gears from his boat and turned it into a space to share his experience and the techniques he had tested as part of the MedBycatch project. He has installed two 7-meter-long sails depicting vulnerable species and displaying the slogan “We have chosen to protect.”

115. The posters on coralligenous and Posidonia meadows have been translated and are available in 10 Mediterranean languages:

- For Posidonia : [Albanian](#), [Arabic](#), [Croatian](#), [English](#), [French](#), [Greek](#), [Italian](#), [Maltese](#), [Montenegrin](#), [Turkish](#)
- For Coralligenous : [Albanian](#), [Croatian](#), [Arabic](#), [English](#), [French](#), [Greek](#), [Italian](#), [Maltese](#), [Montenegrin](#), [Turkish](#)

116. News and information are added to SPAMI Collaborative Platform. Data on SPAMIs and SPAMI management are yearly updated with the support of SPAMI managers.

117. The webpage on SPAMI Day was created in April 2022 and integrated to the SPAMI Collaborative Platform: <https://spami.medchm.net/en/spami-day-->

118. Consultation for the designation of a specialized firm to maintain and improve the SPAMI Collaborative Platform has been launched in April 2023.

Main activity 7.2.5. Co-create and implement education and awareness programmes also in cooperation with academic institutions, focusing on marine and coastal issues, with the aim to promote education on sustainable development

119. For the 2023 edition of SPAMI Day, SPA/RAC issued a call for project proposals aimed to Mediterranean CSOs. The call aimed to solicit ideas for activities to celebrate the SPAMI Day and promote marine biodiversity conservation. Six projects were selected for funding to be implemented in collaboration with SPAMI managers in Albania, Algeria, Italy, Lebanon, Slovenia and Tunisia between 15 April and 15 June 2023.

Outcome 7.3. Towards a digital transformation: use of digital technologies to improve networking and MAP visibility

Main activity 7.3.1. Enhance networking among SPAMIs and increase the visibility of the SPAMI List through the SPAMI Collaborative Platform

120. Data on SPAMIs and SPAMI management are yearly updated with the support of SPAMI managers.

121. The webpage on SPAMI Day was created in April 2022 and integrated to the SPAMI Collaborative Platform: <https://spami.medchm.net/en/spami-day-->

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