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Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Pollution Monitoring

Podgorica, Montenegro, 2-3 April 2019

NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT

The annex to the present note sets out the conclusions and recommendations of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Pollution Monitoring, Podgorica, Montenegro, 2-3 April 2019, adopted by the Meeting.

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ANNEX

Conclusions and Recommendations

On 2 and 3 April 2019, the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Pollution Monitoring was held at Hotel Hilton in Podgorica, Montenegro at the kind invitation of the Ministry for Sustainable Development and Tourism.

The Meeting highly appreciated the welcoming speech delivered by his Excellency, Mr. Pavle Radulovic, Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism.

Following the review and discussions of all agenda items, the Meeting agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations:

Agenda item 3: State of Play of Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) Implementation with regards to EO5 and EO9, MED POL Monitoring Programme and Way Forward

1. Taking into account evolving needs to fill the gaps, in particular those related to assessment component of the Guidance Factsheets, the Meeting welcomed proposed revision of the Guidance Factsheets for Common Indicators 13, 14, 17, 18, 20 and 21 related to the Ecological Objectives 5 (Eutrophication) and 9 (Contaminants) and the Guidance Factsheets for Candidate Indicators 26 and 27 related to Ecological Objective 11 (Energy including underwater noise) and requested the Secretariat to submit to the Meeting of MED POL Focal Points in May 2019 the revised versions of the Guidance Fact Sheets for their approval.
2. With regards to the cross-cutting issues, and after discussion of the document UNEP/MED WG. 463/5, the Meeting:
 - a. Appreciated the work undertaken by the Secretariat to advance the cross-cutting issues which were presented at the Regional Best Practices Meeting (Rome, Italy, 10-12 July 2018);
 - b. Acknowledged the methodologies proposed for GES-integrated assessment based on DPSIR approach and approved them in principle;
 - c. Recommended their testing by the Contracting Parties with the view to present related main findings to the next meeting of CorMon on Pollution Monitoring;
 - d. Recommended to complement these methodologies with the modelling of monitoring data in order to ensure a more reliable quantification of the magnitude of impacts (i.e. scientifically-based scoring);
 - e. Requested the Secretariat to present these methodologies to the forthcoming Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points in May 2019.
 - f. Recommended to continue the application of both trends and new/updated thresholds as appropriate tools for GES assessment, whilst both options should complement each other; and
 - g. Recommended to continue further testing of the Background Assessment Criteria (BACs) and Environmental Assessment Criteria (EACs) and thresholds application on a trial basis at regional and sub-regional levels, including possible revision of the current assessment values (BAC, EAC and ERL) for metals and organic contaminants in coastal sediments and bivalves and fish, in particular for HgT, taking into account sub-regional differences.

3. The Meeting took note of the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap and Needs Assessment presented in document UNEP/MED WG.450/3 and recommended to the Secretariat to ensure its streamlining in the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work 2020-2021 as stipulated by COP Decision IG.23/6.

4. The Meeting appreciated the work undertaken by the Secretariat to follow up on the list of priority contaminants and further highlighted the importance of coordinated efforts at different levels to bridge-fill in the gaps related to knowledge on priority contaminants with the view to their potential consideration in the framework of IMAP.

5. The Meeting took note of the guidance on application of the water typology UNEP/MED WG.463/Inf.5 and requested the Secretariat to use this document for training and capacity building purposes. Following presentation of the experience of Israel related to integrated GES assessment with regards to eutrophication, the Meeting recommended to the Secretariat to consider possible use of this national exercise. The Meeting finally recommended to the Secretariat to finalize the guidance on water typology with the view of submitting it to the next Meeting of the CorMon on Pollution Monitoring.

Agenda item 4: IMAP Implementation at National Level

6. The Meeting acknowledged the high level of commitment of, and the progress made by the Contracting Parties in implementation of the initial phase of IMAP (2016-2019) with regards to EO5 and EO9. The Meeting pointed out the need for further work to successfully implement the IMAP-based national monitoring programmes to deliver the required data needed to assess GES and contribute to 2023 MED QSR preparation.

7. Aware of the complexities and challenges faced, the Meeting highlighted the emerging need for further strengthened and coordinated national IMAP implementation, including specific support for monitoring in off shore areas, as well as capacity-building to fill the gaps clearly identified during IMAP implementation (e.g. standardization of the analytical methods in terms of QA/QC for organic pollutants ~~for~~ (PAH, organochlorine pesticides and PCB), as well as bioaccumulation of contaminants in large predator fish; determination of the level of contaminants in the deep sea environment; building knowledge on emerging contaminants (e.g. pharmaceuticals products) in the marine biota and sediments; etc.).

8. The Meeting pointed out the importance of further efforts by the Contracting Parties to timely generate more complete and synchronized datasets for assessments.

Agenda item 5: Marine Pollution Monitoring Regional Data Base and Related Quality Assurance Issues; Data Standards and Data Dictionaries

9. Taking into account the status of existing and submission of new datasets related to marine pollution monitoring presented in documents UNEP/MED WG.463/3 and UNEP/MED WG.463/Inf.7, the Meeting pointed out the need for the Contracting Parties to undertake the following steps to depict the way forward:

- a) Report on all pending monitoring data collected up to 2018; and
- b) Correct errors of submitted data to the MED POL Database as a necessary step to improve the quality of monitoring data, as well as their assimilation into new IMAP (Pilot) Info System;

10. The Meeting recommended the Secretariat to implement the new Quality Assurance Scheme taking into account the existing mechanisms (e.g. quality templates and QA flagging categories) achieved partially in the past, and ensuring related information are accessible to the MED POL Focal Points.

11. The Meeting reviewed and agreed on the proposed Schemes for Quality Assurance and Control of Data related to Pollution as presented in document UNEP/MED WG. 463/10, by ensuring schemes of data quality assurance ~~s~~ and quality assurance of data assessment are provided separately, and consequently recommended its submission to the forthcoming Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points to be held in May 2019.

12. The Meeting approved the proposed IMAP Common Indicators Data Standards and Data Dictionaries (DSs and DDs) and recommended their submission to the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points.

13. In order to ensure finalization of the IMAP (Pilot) Info-System, the Meeting recommended to the Secretariat and INFO/RAC the realization of the following steps:

- a) Upload finalized DSs and DDs to IMAP (Pilot) Info System whilst providing the consequent changes to the data base structure;
- b) Ensure IMAP (Pilot) Info-System is enabled to receive in 2020 new datasets related to IMAP Common Indicators 13, 14, 17 and 21 ~~in 2020~~;
- c) Inform the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points on the document related to MAP “Data Management Policy” developed by INFO/RAC and submitted for consideration of INFO RAC Focal Points;
- d) Prepare by the end of next biennium (2020-2021) DSs and DDs for other IMAP Common Indicators related to Pollution cluster; and
- e) Request the Secretariat in consultations with MED POL Focal Points to designate national experts that would actively contribute to the finalization of DSs and DDs for other IMAP Common Indicators related to Pollution cluster.

14. The Meeting pointed out the need for reporting data into MEDPOL database by laboratories which demonstrate their proficiency either through the MED POL organized PTs or through global PTs or internationally recognized inter laboratory comparisons (ILCs).

15. In order to further support capacity building of national laboratories to perform QA/QC measures, the Meeting recommended the Secretariat takes appropriate actions to ensure that the results of the PTs and TCs would guide further actions within quality assurance programme of UN Environment/MAP—MEDPOL, including identification of specific knowledge and technical needs of individual laboratories to apply good laboratory practices for analysis of organic contaminants and provision of ~~use of~~ appropriate standards and CRM.

16. The Meeting highlighted a necessity for MEDPOL Focal Points to follow up more closely with national laboratories participating in implementation of MEDPOL IV/IMAP monitoring programme and experts participating respectively in the PTs and TCs organized for trace elements and organic compounds, with a view of further supporting national efforts to implement the QA/QC measures.

17. Noting challenges on the confidentiality of PT results, the Meeting indicated a need for national laboratories to agree on a waiver of this confidentiality towards MED POL Focal Points. Meanwhile, MED POL will continue to communicate the results of PTs to MED POL Focal Points based on the findings presented in regional and national reports for which codes are assigned to respective participating laboratories.

Agenda item 6: Monitoring Protocols for IMAP Common Indicators Related to Pollution

18. The Meeting recommended the Secretariat to address the following issues during the biennium 2020-2021:

- a) Further focus on related good laboratory practices and assessment methods taking into account the permanent changes in literature, reference methods and sampling and assessment techniques, noting the need to ensure that monitoring provides data that enable assessments.
- a)b) Further work on assessments methodologies is needed prior to the monitoring as to guide monitoring strategies ~~with the outcomes of assessments;~~
- b)c) Set the reference conditions ~~(natural background concentrations)~~ not only for chlorophyll-a, but also for nutrients, transparency and oxygen as minimum requirements;
- e)d) Work on assessment criteria for integrated chemical and biological assessment methods and test new research ~~proved-proven~~ tools for monitoring toxic effects;
- d)e) Update monitoring protocols to reflect the continuous technological advances in monitoring of marine environment, including monitoring strategy for off-shore waters, and noting that published standardized methods and guidelines for sample collection and sample processing remain valid in general terms; and
- e)f) Regularly revise the methodologies for sampling monitoring (e.g. instrumental analysis), including Quality Assurance ~~(e.g. instrumental analysis)~~, as well as ensure common methodologies to be agreed when necessary.

19. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to develop an IMAP ~~Practical~~ Monitoring Manual for EO5 and EO9 in the biennium 2020-2021 to collate and agree on the selected methodologies in use in the Mediterranean, including technical details and recommendations for use of monitoring protocols.

20. The Meeting highlighted ~~took note of~~ the importance of the nested approach to be further applied on existing four assessment subregions of the Mediterranean and their subdivisions at sea approach, as well as existence of a number of regular, irregular, national, MSFD/WFD-based and/or fit-for-purpose IMAP Common Indicators scales examples applied around the Mediterranean. To that end, the Meeting encouraged the identification and application of the nested assessment areas, including the finer assessment scales, using bottom-up approach (with the involvement of the Contracting Parties) with the view of confirming existing/extending the list of Mediterranean Seas for the purpose of preparing aggregated assessment products.

21. The Meeting indicated the need for building on the substantial knowledge acquired from marine environment monitoring in order to define the spatial and temporal scales for IMAP Common Indicator 13 (key nutrients), as well as to ensure their further elaboration for IMAP Common Indicator 14 and Common Indicators related to EO9.

22. Finally, the Meeting welcomed the establishment of an Online Working Groups (OWG) for Eutrophication (EO5) and Contaminants (EO9) encompassing scientists from around the Mediterranean working in collaboration with the Secretariat to further contribute to addressing the priorities for the spatial and temporal coverage of the Mediterranean.