

Explanatory note to the 1st UfM Task Force on ENVIRONMENT

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change – May 2014

Created by the 43 Euro-Mediterranean Heads of State and Government meeting in Paris on 13th July 2008, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat is a multilateral partnership composed of 43 countries (28 EU Member States and 15 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries) with the mandate of enhancing regional cooperation and integration between both shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

The first UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change (hereinafter the Declaration) was adopted in Athens on 13 May 2014¹. Through this joint Declaration, the 43 UfM Ministers expressed the urgent need to join forces on three main axes of work, the so called “green economy package” namely:

- The H2020 Initiative for the De-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea (previously called H2020 Initiative for the De-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea)
- Sustainable Consumption and Production and green/circular economy
- Climate Change adaptation and mitigation

Moreover, biodiversity and ecosystem protection, integrated maritime policy, integrated coastal zone management, awareness and education for sustainable development, governance and stakeholder involvement were also highlighted as areas for closer cooperation. In this regard, the Declaration pursues targets which are instrumental in achieving various Sustainable Development Goals (e.g. SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production, SDG 13 Climate Action, SDG 14 Life below water, SDG 15 Life on land, and it strongly contributes to others such as SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities).

In order to assess progress in the implementation of the recommendations agreed upon in Athens, the Declaration itself envisaged a specific mechanism: *“Ministers invite high level experts and officials to meet regularly, at least every two years, and where appropriate in synergy with other regional meetings dealing with environment or climate issues, as long as such meetings remain relevant, in the form of a UfM Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (hereinafter the UfM Working Group) to follow-up on this Declaration and assess the progress made...”*

¹ http://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/20140515_UfM_declaration_FINAL_compromiseeditorial-changes.pdf

The UfM Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (March 2017) and the UfM Task Force on Environment (January 2018)

The 1st UfM Working Group on Environment and Climate Change met on 14-15 March 2017 in Barcelona, Spain, two and a half years following the adoption of the Declaration to review the progress in the implementation up to date. The report “*Initial Review of The Progress in the Implementation at Regional Level of the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change*” presented at the meeting gave an overview of the progresses made over the years by the various organizations and bodies operating at regional level in the implementation of the Declaration under the different topics.

This initial review was built on the contributions provided on a voluntary basis by partner organizations and countries. Processes, programmes, projects, initiatives, and even single activities were screened and the most significant information and data was collected, processed and presented so as to capture the efforts made in the implementation of the Declaration.

This allowed major developments and achievements to be highlighted and emerging issues identified.

The “Agreed Conclusions” of the 2017 UfM Working Group on Environment meeting’s conclusions (see the attached background documents) include:

- ***Establish priorities for action on environment and climate change in the Mediterranean region after 2020, to be the basis for a possible future Ministerial Meeting,***
- ***Launch an external evaluation of the implementation of the Declaration to contribute towards defining priorities, operational modalities and the work programme post-2020; and***
- **Set up a Task Force on Environment (TF on ENV) to facilitate the transition towards the post 2020 agenda on environmental action in the Mediterranean region and identify the regional priorities ahead.**

As presented in Annex 1, the Working Group also agreed on a number of specific actions to support the “green economy package” regarding H2020, sustainable consumption and production (SCP); climate change, climate-environment science policy interface; other environmental issues such as marine protected areas (MPAs), the Bern Convention, integrated maritime policy/blue economy and eco-cities; environmental and climate change governance and stakeholder involvement; increased awareness and education for sustainable development; ensuring implementation of required environment and climate investments; and proposal for emerging dossiers on land restoration/ sustainable land management/forestry, desertification, water, biodiversity, climate mitigation/adaptation; and promote closer involvement of local and regional administrations through the Bologna Charter - the charter of the Regions for the promotion of a common framework for strategic actions aimed at the protection and sustainable development of the Mediterranean coastal areas, to be further integrated in order to support the overall objectives and work of the Ministerial Declaration.

The 1st meeting of the UfM Task Force on Environment will be held in Jordan on the 30 January 2018 and will serve to discuss the way forward on a reinforced green/circular/low-carbon economy package in relation to:

- H2020 Initiative for a Cleaner Mediterranean – completion of the initiative in 2020 and future scenario/s

- Pollution Prevention/Sustainable Consumption and Production; Increased environmental awareness and education for Sustainable Development – focus and options for future programming
- Environmental Governance; closer involvement of local and regional administrations. Main needs and options/scenarios for action
- Current pressures on natural resources (plastic/marine litter, desertification, sustainable land management, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, etc.) and integration of socio economic aspects (migration, urbanization, demographic growth, etc.); stronger link to Climate Change. Main needs and options/scenarios for action

The final version of the *Review of the Progress in the Implementation at Regional Level of the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change* is circulated as background document to the ENV TF in its final version including:

- All the information collected for the March 2017 Working Group on ENV and CC, together with its agreed conclusions;
- The country reports, provided between March and November 2017,
- The implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between UnepMap (UN Environment/MAP) and the UfM Secretariat, shared also as information document at the 20th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols, Tirana, Albania, 17-20 December 2017.

First Meeting of the UfM Task Force on Environment – January 2018

The UfM Environment Task Force (UfM ENV TF) was set up in March 2017 as part of the “Agreed Conclusions” of the 1st UfM Working Group on Environment”.

The UfM ENV TF will serve the purpose of facilitating the transition towards the UfM post 2020 agenda on environment to be agreed within the frame of 2nd UfM Ministerial Meeting on ENV and CC (tentatively scheduled for end 2019-early 2020). More in detail, the UfM ENV TF will contribute to provide technical guidance to the UfM Working Group on Environment and Climate Change in terms of ***priorities, operational modalities and the work program post-2020.***

Based on the 2014 Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change, the existing UfM environment agenda builds on a multi-stakeholder approach where countries and concerned/relevant regional organizations, donors, academia, private sector, non-state actors and other stakeholders collaborate in a dynamic and coordinated manner in order to address and implement the recommendations emerging from the relevant UfM Ministerial Declarations.

The ENV Task Force will be inspired by the same principles and shall follow the same approach. Each stakeholder will contribute to the objectives and operative targets of the common agenda within the frame of its own mandate and scope of action.

The UfM ENV TF will meet at least on an annual basis, possibly back to back with the H2020 meetings and/or with other regional gatherings/events dealing with environment or climate issues (as long as such meetings remain relevant).

Within this context and building on the ongoing implementation of the 2014 UfM Ministerial Declaration on ENV and CC, the UfM ENV TF is expected to:

- Provide technical recommendations in order to further develop the UfM work programme and portfolio through enhanced synergies and cooperation, in line with the regional and shared countries' priorities, needs and obligations (e.g. engagements within SDGs commitments, International and Regional Conventions, Climate Change agreements, etc);
- Exchange information on major environment planning and developments of regional interest;
- Address upcoming/emerging issues and propose joint action/measures as opportune;
- Support in shaping scenarios/options for action around the shared priorities, to be presented and decided upon at the WG on ENV and CC;
- Serve as a regional [technical] reference group for views/recommendations/guidance on the UfM environment-related subjects in the fields agreed by the 43 countries;
- Report to relevant UfM bodies on progress in the advancement of the joint UfM environment work.

Additionally, to effectively deliver on this mandate the UfM Environment Task Force operates in a manner that ensures adequate political input from Ministries in charge, by

- Ensuring the presence and participation of official representative/s of the relevant Ministry/ies;
- Ensuring a consistent and regular, as far as possible, participation thus safeguarding memory and continuity, and securing coordination according to the country settings.

Depending on needs and on available human and financial resources, the ENV TF could need more than just one annual meeting; such possibility will be considered upon availability of financial resource to support the meetings themselves.

2018-2019 - Tentative Roadmap to the 2nd UfM Ministerial on ENV and CC

To move towards the next UfM Ministerial on ENV and CC (*as per decisions of the 2014 Ministerial Declaration and related UfM Working Group on ENV and CC held in march 2017*) the following tentative timeline is suggested.

No	Work/Event	When	Key outputs
2017			
1	<i>UfM Environment Task Force</i>	January 2018	Initial discussions on the UfM ENV post-2020 priorities, operational modalities and the work programme to be presented to the 2 nd WG on ENV and CC and be later on reflected in the 2 nd UfM Ministerial Declaration on ENV and CC Focus on scenarios/options for joint action to reinforce the “green, circular, low carbon, social equitable economy package” and integrating the emerging priorities adopted at the 2014 Ministerial on ENV and CC Special focus on the future of the H2020 Initiative for a Cleaner Mediterranean Links with the CC agenda and work
2	CC Expert Group	April 2018	Follow-up of the CC EG work program (2017-2022) and ongoing activities Carry on and deepen the discussion of the UfM CC post-2020 priorities, to be presented to the 2 nd WG on ENV and CC and be later on reflected in the 2 nd UfM Ministerial Declaration on ENV and CC
3	<i>External Evaluation of the 2014 UfM Ministerial on ENV and CC</i>	April to September 2018	External evaluation of the implementation of the 2014 Declaration to contribute towards defining priorities, operational modalities and the work programme post-2020;
4	<i>UfM Env TF ?</i>	November 2017 (back to back to the WG on ENV and CC)	Continue/deepen/Focus the discussion of the UfM ENV TF <i>as and if needed</i>
5	WG on ENV and CC	November 2018	Analyze and discuss the proposals formulated by the UfM ENV TF , the CC Expert Group and the UfM external Evaluation on ENV and CC
2019			
7	<i>UfM SOM</i>	February/March 2019	Present a first draft proposal of UfM Ministerial Conference and related content to the UfM Senior Officials (MoFAs)
6	<i>UfM Env TF</i>	First semester 2019	Continue to elaborate the ENV post-2020 priorities, operational modalities and the work program to be reflected in the UfM Ministerial Declaration, as agreed at the SOM based on the concept note
	<i>CC Expert Group</i>	First semester 2019	Continue to elaborate the CC post-2020 priorities, on the basis of the 2017-2022 work program, operational modalities and the renewed work program to be reflected in the UfM Ministerial Declaration

No	Work/Event	When	Key outputs
	<i>1st Ad Hoc SOM/UfM WG on ENV and CC (and associated stakeholder's consultation)</i>		Preliminary official Consultation on the draft Ministerial Declaration on ENV and CC at the level of MoE/MoFA (and/or other ministries in charge of CC)
	<i>UfM SOM</i>	October 2019	Presentation of the status of advancement of the negotiations on the 2 nd UfM Ministerial Declaration on ENV and CC
	<i>(2nd Ad Hoc SOM/UfM WG on ENV and CC) If needed</i>	If need be	2 nd official Consultation on the Ministerial Declaration, if needed
End 2019-beginning 2020			
2nd UfM Ministerial Conference on ENV and CC			

ANNEX 1.

Final Agreed Conclusions on the Way Forward – 1st UfM WG on Environment and Climate Change (WG on ENV and CC) - 15th March 2017

Following the recommendations of the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change (hereinafter the Declaration) adopted in Athens on 13 May 2014, calling for a specific monitoring mechanism in the implementation of the Declaration (“Ministers invite high level experts and officials to meet regularly, at least every two years, and where appropriate in synergy with other regional meetings dealing with environment or climate issues, as long as such meetings remain relevant, in the form of a UfM Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (hereinafter the UfM Working Group) to follow-up on this Declaration and assess the progress made...”), the first UfM Working Group on ENV and CC met in Barcelona on 14-15th March 2017.

The WG on ENV and CC discussed progress in the implementation and the future activities in relation to the 2014 UfM Ministerial Declaration on ENV and CC in terms of:

1. Key highlights and major issues to be tackled, and
2. Main priorities and actions for post-2020 and the possibility of a future UfM Ministerial Meeting.

The following suggestions on the way forward emerged and the WG agrees to:

- Establish priorities for action on environment and climate change in the Mediterranean region after 2020, to be the basis for a possible future Ministerial Meeting;
 - Launch an external evaluation of the implementation of the Declaration. This evaluation will contribute towards defining priorities, operational modalities and the work programme post-2020;
 - Set up a Task Force on Environment (TF on ENV) to facilitate the transition towards the post 2020 agenda on environmental action in the Mediterranean region and identify the regional priorities ahead. The TF will meet on an annual basis, possibly back to back with the H2020 steering committee;
 - Convene the WG on ENV and CC in 2018 to take stock of the work of the TF on ENV and the CC Expert Group and to look towards a potential Ministerial Meeting in 2019 or 2020;
 - Reinforce coordination at regional and national level between complementary actions implementing the objectives of the Declaration with a view to enhancing implementation where possible;
 - Ensure that programs fully cover the whole region to enable the full participation of all Mediterranean countries in the programs;
 - Reinforce the package of actions [define] in support of the Mediterranean green/circular economy/low emission agenda; in line with the relevant SDGs, better integrate, socio-economic aspects with emphasis on job creation dimension, youth, women;
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- Consider the importance of reintroducing the ‘Horizon 2020 Coordination Mechanism’ (to ensure consolidation of results; stronger coordination; overall communication and visibility)
 - Synchronize as far as possible the components of the H2020 initiative;

- Ensuring as far as possible no funding gap of the h2020 components during the implementation of the H2020 initiative;
- Further support the operationalisation of an effective regional information system based on solid national information system and promote integrated environmental approaches;
- Better link the H2020 initiative as well with research initiatives (H2020 R+I, Blumed, PRIMA....)
- Promote the long-term development of the existing PRPI Road Map with IFIs; Ensure the full involvement of partner institutions and donors for the work of the PRPI group to be efficient; accelerate advancing/launching/operationalising of the H2020 investment flagship projects;
- Promote as much as possible the alignment of existing/new facilities and programs with the revised National Action Plans for depollution priorities for project development and financing;
- Urge countries to better coordinate at national level and engage all relevant ministries and institutions
- Ensure geographical balance of flagship projects within the Mediterranean region.

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION (SCP)

- Ensure maximum support to the full implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production and of the National Action Plans in countries that have already adopted them; promote the elaboration and adoption of National Action Plans in the remaining countries;
- Building on the successful results of the ongoing regional programmes, consider the importance of having adequate financial resources beyond 2018 to keep up the momentum created at regional level by the SwitchMed Programme; scale up thematically and geographically the existing efforts into a set of longer term expanded actions, including access to financing and facilitation of SCP/RE related investments, so as to consolidate the critical mass of regional and local capacities necessary to support the move toward SCP and green/circular economy models;
- Accelerate implementation of activities under the DRIVE Fund in the Western Balkans; Promote establishment of new, similar donor funds to facilitate access to financing for SMEs and green entrepreneurs adopting SCP practices in the entire Med.
- Link with broader policies of support to business development, employment and SMEs

CLIMATE CHANGE (CC)

Following the assessment of the implementation of the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change, the UfM Co-Presidency took note of the following comments expressed during the First Working Group on Environment and Climate Change:

1. UfM Member States recalled the importance of the UfM Climate Change Expert Group for climate policy dialogue in the region.
2. Within the mandate given by the 2014 Ministerial Declaration, UfM Member States assessed the work of the UfM Climate Change Expert Group, in particular in the context of the Paris Agreement and the challenge of its implementation.
3. In order to deliver more tangible outcomes and improve its effectiveness, UfM Member States agreed to revise the operational modalities of the UfM Climate Change Expert Group.
4. UfM Member States took note of the proposed revised operational modalities and work program 2017-2022 prepared by the UfM Secretariat upon request by the UfM Co-presidencies and after written consultation of UfM Member States. They provided in particular the following recommendations:

- a) They underlined the need to clarify the composition of the UfM Climate Change Expert Group, improve its effectiveness and strengthen the continuity of its action.
- b) They underlined the need for meetings focusing on precise issues, in order to mobilise relevant experts and produce tangible outcomes. However these should remain ad hoc meetings and no new permanent committees or sub-groups should be created.
- c) The UfM Secretariat will submit to the 5th meeting of the Climate Change Expert Group a revised version of the draft operational modalities and Work Programme.

- On the science-policy interface

UfM Member States welcomed the willingness of the scientists gathered within the MedECC network to contribute to the vulnerability assessment of the Mediterranean regarding climate and environmental impacts on relevant sectors.

Given the cross-sectoral nature of the MedECC project and its strong environmental dimension, any possible UfM contribution to the MedCC activities shall be elaborated in an inclusive way, by involving jointly the Environment and Climate Change representatives of the UfM Member States and in coordination with all relevant UfM structures. The project should report back to the WG on Environment and Climate Change.

- On environment and climate investments:

UfM Member States welcomed the work of the Regional Finance Cooperation Committee for Climate Action and invited international financial institutions and donors to work together towards a better identification of climate finance gaps and needs in the region (and explore how to facilitate access to climate finance).

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

- Promote the creation of new MPAs, including in the open seas, where possible to reach the established Aichi target 11;
- Support more effective, equitable and efficient management of existing MPAs by 2020 through more financial and human means available for MPAs as well as through long-term capacity-building and networking at Mediterranean level;
- Further support the establishment of the MPAs Trust Fund (call for more countries to join), building on the lessons learned from other well-established regional conservation trust fund delivering conservation to marine areas around the world;
- Strengthen and develop the role of MPAs as a marine spatial management tool in supporting ecosystem-based adaptation and mitigation to climate change.

Bern Convention in particular Larnaka and Tunis Action Plan

Ensure adequate country engagement in actions under the intergovernmental task force on illegal killing of birds;

Integrated Maritime Policy/Blue Economy

- Contribute to the preparation of the possible 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Blue Economy,;
- Optimize and fully operationalize the existing Virtual Knowledge Centre as a stakeholder register and networking platform;
- Contribute to the Initiative on Sustainable Development of the Blue Economy in the Western Mediterranean as well as to the other relevant initiative on blue economy;
- Expand the Bluemed Initiative to other Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries willing to join;
- Further promote maritime spatial planning /integrated coastal zone management as governance and management tool (ensuring sea land interaction);
- Maximize the involvement of relevant stakeholders (including in the organisation of the 1st Regional Stakeholders Conference)

Eco-cities

- Welcome and support the 2nd UfM Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Urban Development in 2017
- Promote the upcoming edition of the Jordan-led Eco Cities Forum as a regional platform

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE GOVERNANCE AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

- At regional level, progress on the adoption of multi stakeholders/participatory approaches (NGOs, academia, private sector, etc.), progressively extending to local authorities;
- Increased coordination among funding programs around common/shared priorities (e.g. environment and climate funding; cooperation among EU funding programs; etc)

INCREASED AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

- Stress the importance of working to increase awareness and education on environmental and CC issues, including by supporting the implementation of the Action Plan of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development;

ENSURING IMPLEMENTATION OF REQUIRED ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE INVESTMENTS

- Better integrate newly established IFIs green and climate funds to serve environmental de-pollution and pollution prevention investments;
- Activate the newly established UfM Regional Finance Cooperation Committee for Climate Action (RFCCCA);
- Address environment and climate investments through the closer involvement of all concerned national authorities, including the Ministries of Finance/Economy/Planning

PROPOSAL FOR EMERGING DOSSIERS TO BE FURTHER INTEGRATED IN ORDER TO SUPPORT THE OVERALL OBJECTIVES AND WORK OF THE MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

Take note of the potential for:

- Integration/association of the overall Mediterranean Forestry/Silva Mediterranean frameworks to address desertification, water, biodiversity, sustainable land management,

climate mitigation/adaptation as well as contribute to promoting SCP business models, job creation and green investments;

- to promote closer involvement of local and regional coastal administrations through the Bologna Charter (the charter of the Regions for the promotion of a common framework for strategic actions aimed at the protection and sustainable development of the Mediterranean coastal areas). The Bologna Charter is open to more Southern & Eastern coastal administrations of the Mediterranean to join on a voluntary basis.

Final general point

Countries are requested to provide the Secretariat with indications on the national progress in the implementation of the Declaration as well as recommendations for the post 2020 agenda in written briefings by the end of March 2017.