
**MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN (MAP)
REGIONAL MARINE POLLUTION EMERGENCY RESPONSE CENTRE FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA (REMPEC)**

Sixteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of the Regional
Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the
Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)

REMPEC/WG.61/5
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Agenda Item 5: Implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031)

Implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031)

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Note by the Secretariat

The Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031), hereinafter referred to as the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), was adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (“the Barcelona Convention”), in December 2021 (Decision IG.25/16).

This document presents the progress made with the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and presents the outcome of the Second Coordination Meeting on the Implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), hereinafter referred to as the Second Coordination Meeting, held in Malta on 21 November 2024.

Introduction

1 The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) was adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (“the Barcelona Convention”), in December 2021 (Decision IG.25/16) and is approximately 30 percent of the way through its implementation period.

2 In accordance with Decision IG.25/16, the Second Coordination Meeting was held in Malta on 21 November 2024, with the principal objective of reporting and assessing the progress made in the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). The Report of the Second Coordination Meeting is presented in REMPEC/WG.61/INF.20.

Biennial Review

3 A Biennial Review Report was developed by the Secretariat. The Report sought to assess the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and identify potential areas for improvement. The Biennial Review was presented as REMPEC/WG.58/3 and was considered by the Second Coordination Meeting.

4 The Biennial Review concluded that the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) is a new and ambitious approach to address the challenges of ship source pollution in the Mediterranean, and, as a result, will need time to reach its full potential. Currently, activities seeking to address the seven CSOs of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) are widespread, but they are also disjointed and uncoordinated. There are therefore still many opportunities to increase collaborative working throughout the region, improving efficiencies and avoiding duplication of efforts. The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) remains a key tool in tackling some of these issues in the region, however its success is reliant on appropriate engagement and support from all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders.

5 This first biennial review has highlighted the huge potential to further improve cooperation on efforts to tackle the main sources of pollution from ships in the Mediterranean, but has also highlighted that there is still much to be done to implement the actions of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and to achieve its vision of *“A clean and healthy Mediterranean marine and coastal environment with a sustainable and pollution free maritime sector, supported by a rigorous enforcement system and strengthened multi-sectoral cooperation, for the benefit of present and future generations”*.

6 The Biennial Review Report identified ten recommendations aimed to strengthen the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). These are detailed in Paragraph 4.4 of Biennial Review Report (REMPEC/WG.58/3). The Second Coordination Meeting approved the recommendations made in the Report and referred the recommendations for the endorsement of the 16th Meeting of REMPEC Focal Points.

7 In this context, it is proposed that the Meeting endorses the recommendations made in the Biennial Review Report.

Work of the Intersessional Working Groups

8 The First Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) (Malta, 29 November-1 December 2022), hereinafter referred to as the First Coordination meeting, *inter alia*, agreed to establish seven (7) Intersessional Working Groups (IWGs) with the aim to discuss the progress and coordination of implementation of actions, during and between the biennial coordination meetings on the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). The IWGs were established in July 2024 and document REMPEC/WG.58/2/1, provided a brief summary of the work undertaken by the IWGs alongside recommendations from the IWGs and suggested priorities for the next biennium.

9 The following general observations were considered by the Second Coordination Meeting, about the way in which the IWGs were operating:

.1 not all IWGs were able to become operational. This was partly due to time limitations, but was also due to a lack of leadership / ownership;

.2 for the IWGs that were operational, there was in some cases limited engagement, with a lack of national nominations and stakeholder nominations for experts to join the groups;

.3 for the IWGs that were operational, there was also, in some cases, limited engagement from Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders during discussions at the meetings, as well as limited feedback received outside of the IWG meetings;

.4 REMPEC, as the Secretariat responsible for the overall coordination of the work being undertaken, should not take the lead of any of the IWGs; and

.5 concerns were raised during IWG discussions that the terms of reference (ToR) for the IWGs were not clear, and participants at the IWG meetings felt unable to fulfil the requirements of the ToR, as currently set out.

10 The Second Coordination Meeting approved the proposals made by the Secretariat to:

.1 re-establish the IWGs with one for each CSO (seven in total), including the Draft terms of reference for the Establishment of the Intersessional Working Groups (IWGs), contained as Annex to REMPEC/WG.58/7; and

.2 establish a separate Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) Inter-Secretariat Group to support coordination amongst relevant stakeholders.

11 The purpose of the re-structured IWGs would be to focus on identifying the needs of Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to fulfil the relevant CSO of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). This would include defining an action plan, based on the needs identified by the IWG, and highlighting the appropriate priority actions required to achieve the CSO. As the IWG matures, there would be a requirement to review and amend the defined Action Plan to ensure it remains current, and that it reflects the shared and collective requirements of Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

12 It is envisaged that the IWGs would include national nominations from each Contracting Party to the Barcelona Convention, to ensure that all Contracting Parties are fairly represented in the requirement of needs set out by the IWGs. The IWGs would also be open to relevant observer organizations and stakeholders. In this way, it will be ensured that the output developed is inclusive and representative as much as possible, taking into consideration the input of all Contracting Parties and relevant stakeholders.

13 On the other hand, the purpose of the Inter-Secretariat Group would be to bring together the relevant stakeholders in the Mediterranean region to consider the needs and priority actions put forward by each of the IWGs, and define programmes of work, coordinating activities, to support Contracting Parties in achieving the CSOs of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), based on the needs and actions identified by the IWGs.

14 The IWGs and the Inter-Secretariat Group would need to work alongside each other, with reciprocal reporting between each, and clearly defined meeting schedules to enable a fully functioning feedback loop (i.e. as needs are identified, activities can be defined and resources allocated as appropriate).

15 The Second Coordination Meeting agreed to the establishment of the restructured IWGs, in particular the establishment of one combined IWG in respect of CSO 1, including the revised Terms of

Reference. Furthermore, The Second Coordination Meeting identified the possible coordinators for each of the IWGs. A number of delegations volunteered to coordinate three (3) of the IWGs¹ whilst no delegation volunteering to coordinate IWGs in respect of CSOs 4, 5 and 6. It was also emphasised that unless a coordinator is nominated for the remaining three (3) IWGs in time for consideration by the 16th Meeting of REMPEC Focal Points, the matter would need to be considered further by the said meeting.

16 In this context, it is proposed that the Meeting:

- .1 endorses the establishment of the IWGs, including the revised Terms of Reference;
- .2 discuss the way forward concerning the nomination of coordinators in respect of IWGs for CSOs 4, 5 and 6;
- .3 urges the Contracting Parties and Stakeholders to actively contribute to the work of the IWGs and to ensure that the necessary leadership, ownership and contribution is given throughout the forthcoming biennium;
- .4 endorse the establishment of the Inter-Secretariat Group;
- .5 emphasises on the need for REMPEC as the Secretariat and all involved stakeholders to work together to ensure better coordination and synergies in their activities, to ensure effective implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031); and
- .6 encourages regional and international institutions to formalise their cooperation defined during the Meeting through participation in the newly proposed Inter-Secretariat Group, and through the establishment of sustainable partnership agreements to provide financial and technical support to Contracting Parties for the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

Mid-Term Review

17 Paragraph 5.5 of Decision 25/16 requires that: *“Following a period of five (5) years, the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan will be reviewed based on an analysis of the progress of its implementation and on the outcome of discussions on emerging issues. The need to update and revise the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan will be assessed, in 2026, with a view to potentially adopt a revised strategy in 2027. The Review will take into consideration the development of the forthcoming UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy (2028–2032), alongside Contracting Party reporting on the status of implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan.”*

18 The Second Coordination Meeting requested the Secretariat to begin preparations to undertake the Mid-term Review of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan, in 2026.

19 In this context, it is recommended that the Meeting instructs the Secretariat to begin preparations to undertake the Mid-term Review of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan.

Priority Actions for the Biennium 2026-2027 and Beyond

20 According to the practical arrangements for the management and implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), as contained in Decision 25/16, the outcome of the biennial meeting will be considered for the preparation of the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work (PoW) and Budget. Furthermore, relevant national, regional and international organisations, institutions and agencies, and accredited UNEP/MAP Partners will be encouraged to build their respective programme

¹ IWG-CSO1 PREPARE / RESPOND coordinated by France
 IWG-CSO2/CSO03 CLIMATE CHANGE/AIR EMISSIONS coordinated by Italy
 IWG-CSO7 EMERGING ISSUES coordinated by OceanCare

of work taking into account the outcome of the meeting.

21 The Second Coordination Meeting considered the recommendations from the IWGs and suggested priorities for the biennium 2026-27, in the context of preparation for the upcoming mid-term review of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). The Meeting discussed and agreed upon priority actions for the elaboration of the PoW 2026-2027.

22 The Secretariat has taken into consideration the identified priorities as agreed by the Second Coordination Meeting, when drafting the planned activities for the PoW 2026-27, as presented in document REMPEC/WG.61/10 and to be considered under Agenda Item 10.

Organisation of Future Coordination Meetings

23 In accordance with paragraph 7 of Decision 25/16, *“a biennial meeting will be organised on the first year of each biennium,”*

24 To date, REMPEC has organised two (2) Coordination Meetings. It has become evident that in view of the nature of the discussions and decisions considered during the Coordination Meeting, it would be more productive and efficient to combine such items for discussion, directly for consideration of the Meeting of REMPEC Focal Points. This will further streamline the decision-making process and improve the practical arrangements for the management and implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). This will also result in cost efficiency and better use of available resources, including reduction of overheads. This proposal combined with the envisaged improvement in coordination of the restructured IWGs, will result in more transparency and better governance structures.

25 In this context, the Secretariat proposes that the biennial Coordination Meeting envisaged under the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) is considered as a standing agenda item of the agenda of the Meeting of REMPEC Focal Points, without the need to organise a separate meeting.

Actions requested by the Meeting

26 **The Meeting is invited to:**

- .1 **take note** of the information provided in the present document; and
- .2 **comment** as deemed appropriate, particularly on the recommendations contained in paragraphs, 7, 16, 19 and 25 to the present document.
