



Mediterranean  
Action Plan  
Barcelona  
Convention



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

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Second Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean  
Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response  
to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031)

REMPEC/WG.58/3  
18 October 2024  
Original: English

Lija, Malta, 21 November 2024

**Agenda item 3: Biennial Review Report**

**Report assessing the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031),  
identifying suggested areas for improvement**

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REMPEC  
Malta, 2024

### **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 biennial review of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), which assesses the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and identifies potential areas for improvement.

## **BIENNIAL REVIEW REPORT**

### **Introduction**

1. The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) is approximately 30 percent of the way through its implementation period. The Biennial Review seeks to assess the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and identify potential areas for improvement.
2. The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan include 190 agreed actions, across seven CSOs. In the first biennium (2021-2022) following adoption of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), data was collected from a total of six Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and 15 relevant stakeholders in the Mediterranean on the status of implementation.
3. Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders were provided with an Excel form which listed all actions included within the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), and a detailed analysis of the responses was undertaken to inform discussions at the First Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). This analysis undertaken in the first biennium (in 2022) was used by the established Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) Intersessional Working Groups (IWGs), and the outcomes of the IWGs has been used to inform the Biennial Review.
4. In addition, a qualitative desk-based study has been conducted to review the sufficiency of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and to identify potential areas for improvement.

### **The Biennial Review**

5. The Biennial Review is presented in the Annex to this document. The Biennial Review concludes 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.
6. 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”.
7. The Biennial Review has also highlighted concerns raised around the workload required to report on progress of the actions in the Action Plan associated with the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), due to the number of discrete actions included. Although by reporting against each action a very accurate picture of progress can be gathered, it may be preferable to reconsider the reporting approach and the number of actions in the Action Plan associated with the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

8. The Biennial Review identifies ten recommendations for the Second Coordination Meeting, to strengthen the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). These are detailed in Paragraph 4.4 of Biennial Review.

**Action Requested**

9. The Second Coordination Meeting is invited to note the information presented in the Biennial Review and consider the Recommendations set out in Paragraph 4.4 of the Annex.

ANNEX

**Biennial Review**

**Report assessing the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the  
Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), identifying suggested areas for  
improvement**

**2024**

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

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**Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response  
to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031)**

**Biennial Review**

**Report assessing the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the Mediterranean  
Strategy (2022-2031), identifying suggested areas for improvement**

**Prepared by Jennifer Godwin**

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*The views expressed in this document are those of the Contractor and are not attributed in any way to the United Nations (UN), the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), IMO or REMPEC.*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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).

The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) works towards a shared 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”.

The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) sets out seven Common Strategic Objectives (CSOs). The CSOs apply to the Mediterranean region as a whole, and Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, alongside the various organisations and institutions of the Mediterranean, have a role to play in achieving the objectives.

This Biennial Review was conducted to assess the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). The Biennial Review is informed by:

- analysis undertaken in first biennium (2021-2022) following adoption of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031);
- discussions and information gathered on current status of action by the seven Intersessional Working Groups (IWGs) which were established by the First Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), held in Malta, from 29 November to 1 December 2022;
- a qualitative desk-based study to review the sufficiency of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and to identify potential areas for improvement; and
- stakeholder feedback collected through online discussions within the IWGs, REMPEC, and through written feedback on the progress made in the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

The Biennial Review found that 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.

The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) is approximately 30 percent of the way through its implementation period, and as a new and ambitious approach to address the challenges of ship source pollution in the Mediterranean, will need time to reach its full potential.

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.

The Biennial Review identifies the following recommendations for the Second Coordination Meeting, to strengthen the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031):

- .1 There is a need for greater ownership of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and the actions to deliver the seven CSOs, amongst Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders;
- .2 There is also a need for greater recognition of the ambition behind the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), i.e. that this is not a REMPEC led strategy, but a strategy for all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders, and its success is dependent on taking collective action to address ship source pollution in the Mediterranean;
- .3 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders should support and encourage active engagement in the IWGs;
- .4 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention should consider the specific and targeted recommendations on the work recommended as set out in the reports of the IWGs;
- .5 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention should consider the IWGs required to support the delivery of the various CSOs, and if there is a need to combine existing groups (for example to have a unique IWG for CSO 1 instead of the current 2 groups: IWG-PREVENT and IWG-RESPOND due to overlapping and duplication of efforts), or if there is a need to revisit the ToRs for all of the IWG to ensure they are able to be operationalised and support the delivery of the CSOs;
- .6 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders should consider the upcoming opportunity to define new CSOs during the mid-term review of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031);
- .7 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders should consider the reporting approach and additional division of actions in the reporting format of the Action Plan associated to the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), seeking to manage the expected workload of reporting on the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) in future biennium;
- .8 Contracting Parties should consider how the IWGs could be organised so that they are able to review and update the Action Plan and associated actions, to discuss identified support needs raised by Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, alongside activities being organised / offered by relevant stakeholders (including training opportunities, funding, and capacity-building), considering how best to raise awareness of existing opportunities, and also how to highlight requirements for additional support, towards better implementation of the actions of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031);
- .9 Contracting Parties should take note of the work being undertaken in other regional and international organisations, considering if there is a need to revisit any of the CSOs of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) to reflect developments in understanding in readiness for the mid-term review; and
- .10 To support better coordination nationally, regionally and internationally, relevant stakeholders should regularly engage in the IWGs set up under the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).



# **Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031):**

## **Biennial Review**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background**

1.1. 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).

1.2. The overarching objective of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) is to provide guidance to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in meeting their obligations under Articles 4 (1), 6 and 9 thereof, the Protocol concerning Cooperation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in Cases of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea (“the 2002 Prevention and Emergency Protocol”) and the Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency (“the 1976 Emergency Protocol”). In addition, the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) seeks to contribute to a number of overarching and thematic mediterranean strategies.

1.3. Working towards a shared 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”, the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) sets out seven Common Strategic Objectives (CSOs). The CSOs apply to the Mediterranean region as a whole, and Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, alongside the various organisations and institutions of the Mediterranean, have a role to play in achieving the objectives.

1.4. The seven CSOs are:

CSO 1 - Prevent, prepare for, and respond to operational, illegal and accidental oil and HNS pollution from ships

CSO 2 - Promote and support the development and implementation of innovative global solutions to mitigate and respond to climate change

CSO 3 - Reduce and monitor air emissions from ships to a level that is not harmful to the marine environment, or the health of the coastal population of the Mediterranean

CSO 4 - Prevent and reduce litter (in particular plastic) entering the marine environment from ships, in order to limit the environmental, health, and socio-economic impact of marine litter in the Mediterranean

CSO 5 - Eliminate the introduction of non-indigenous species by shipping activities

CSO 6 - Achieve a well-managed safe and pollution free Mediterranean, with integrated marine spatial planning and designation of special areas, where shipping activity has a limited impact upon the marine environment

CSO 7 - Identify and understand collectively emerging issues related to pollution from ships in the Mediterranean, and define required actions to address issues identified

1.5. The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) is supported by an Action Plan, which sets out the specific actions required under each CSO. The actions are grouped by ‘areas of influence’ (People, Institutions, Infrastructure; and Information and Knowledge Sharing) and are guided by supporting objectives for each area of influence. The supporting objectives for each area of influence are set out in the tables below.

Table 1: Actions on people - Related to people, skills and networks within the Mediterranean

Area of Influence	Supporting Objective
Networks	To support and encourage open and collaborative networks between all stakeholders of the Mediterranean for the sharing of knowledge, best practice, and experiences, with the aim to identify synergies and strengthen multi-sectoral cooperation and collaboration.
Capacity Building / Technical Cooperation	To support the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to ensure that they have adequate knowledge, expertise and experience to implement the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), and any / all associated requirements to reduce marine pollution from ships in the Mediterranean. To support Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to ensure that personnel responsible for responding to marine pollution incidents have adequate practical and operational training and are sufficiently prepared to act in the event of an emergency.
Operations	To support Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to ensure that they have developed or have access to pollution response services to act in the event of an emergency.

Table 2: Actions on institutions - Related to existing institutions, administrations and organisations within the Mediterranean.

Area of Influence	Supporting Objective
Governance	To ensure that Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention have a clear understanding of the relevant roles and responsibilities of governing bodies, in terms of implementing the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).
Ratification / Transposition	To support the ratification by all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention of all relevant international conventions which aim towards reducing pollution from ships in the marine environment. To ensure the transposition into national law of all relevant international conventions which aim towards reducing pollution from ships in the marine environment.

Implementation	To support administrations with implementation of relevant international conventions.
Enforcement	To set-up efficient and strict enforcement of all relevant international conventions, as transposed into national law, which aim towards reducing pollution from ships in the marine environment.

Table 3: Actions for infrastructure - Related to the physical infrastructure, equipment and technology available within the Mediterranean.

Area of Influence	Supporting Objective
Port Reception Facilities	To ensure that adequate port reception facilities are available in the Mediterranean to limit the potential for marine pollution from ships.
Alternative Energy / New Technology	To ensure that there are appropriate facilities to support ships operating with alternative energy.
Response Means	To ensure that the required means to respond to marine pollution incidents are available and strategically placed throughout the Mediterranean region.
Surveillance / Monitoring Means	To ensure that the required surveillance and monitoring infrastructure (e.g. satellite imaging) means to deter and detect illicit discharges and emissions from ships, to exchange the monitoring information, and to assist in responding to marine pollution incidents, are available and strategically placed throughout the Mediterranean region.

Table 4: Actions for information and knowledge sharing - Related to the sharing of best practices, communication, research and development within the Mediterranean.

Area of Influence	Supporting Objective
Standards / Guidelines	To establish, adopt, disseminate, implement and enforce required regional standards.
Decision Making Tools	To evaluate the need for, develop, maintain and upgrade decision support tools to support well-informed and prompt decisions by Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.
Monitoring and Reporting Obligations	To support the coordination of monitoring and reporting efforts between Mediterranean coastal States.
Research and Development	To encourage Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to participate in research and development of new technologies and techniques to address the issues of pollution from ships, and to share their results for the benefit of the Mediterranean region and its coastal States. To develop and upgrade means/platform enabling the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to communicate and exchange information in real time.

## **Objective of the Biennial Review**

1.6. The purpose of the biennial review of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), hereinafter referred to as the Biennial Review, is to assess the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and identify potential areas for improvement.

1.7. The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) sets out a mechanism for all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders in the Mediterranean to coordinate efforts to meet its CSOs, namely through the establishment of a Coordination Meeting organised in the first year of each biennium. The purpose of the Coordination Meeting is to:

- .1 Report and assess the progress made in the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031);
- .2 Define priority actions and propose related activities for the following biennium; and
- .3 Define roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the proposed activities and establish operational and strategic synergies, through specific partnership agreements, if required, by coordinating parallel initiatives and processes to ensure the capitalisation of past and ongoing efforts, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the resources and expertise mobilised to meet the CSOs of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

1.8. Therefore, the Biennial Review will also support the Second Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) to fulfil the objectives identified above.

## **Information used to inform the Biennial Review**

1.9. The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan include 190 agreed actions, across seven CSOs. When these actions are broken down further (with subcategories of tasks underneath each action and related area of influence), they equate to 367 distinct actions. Some of these actions relate only to Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, whereas some can only be delivered by relevant stakeholders. However, the majority of the actions should be delivered in cooperation.

1.10. In the first biennium (2021-2022) following adoption of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), data was collected from a total of [6] Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and [15] relevant stakeholders in the Mediterranean on the status of implementation. Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders were provided with an Excel form which listed all 367 actions included within the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), and a detailed analysis of the responses was undertaken to inform discussions at the First Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), held in Malta, from 29 November to 1 December 2022, hereinafter referred to as the First Coordination Meeting. 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 carried out between the biennial coordination meetings on the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). The complete list of IWGs is provided in Annex 1.

1.11. The detailed analysis undertaken in the first biennium, in 2022, also supported the work of the seven (7) IWGs and the outcome of the work of the seven (7) IWGs have been used to inform the Biennial Review, specifically to inform an assessment of the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

1.12. In addition, a qualitative desk-based study has been conducted to review the sufficiency of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and to identify potential areas for improvement.

1.13. Finally, stakeholder feedback was collected through online discussions within the IWGs REMPEC, and through written feedback on the progress made in the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). This feedback was incorporated into the sections of the Biennial Review.

### **Mid-term Review and Evaluation in 2026 of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031)**

1.14. As detailed in the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), 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 adopting a revised Strategy in 2027. The review will take into consideration the development of the 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.

1.15. The Biennial Review will provide input into the Mid-term Review and Evaluation process expected in the next biennium (2026-2027).

## **2. STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY (2022-2031)**

### **Review of the capacity-building efforts, training programs, and awareness-raising initiatives undertaken by relevant stakeholders to support the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031)**

2.1. The capacity-building efforts to address the specific actions of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) have been considered in this review process. Information on capacity-building efforts was collected in 2022 in readiness for the First Coordination Meeting and presented in document REMPEC/WG.52/3, an ‘Analytical report on the countries needs and priorities against regional stakeholders ongoing and future actions and projects and available resources, identifying any gaps and duplication’. To supplement this information, capacity-building efforts were also considered by the seven IWGs.

2.2. In summary, there are a number of initiatives to support capacity-building taking places across all CSOs. Some of the capacity-building efforts, training programs, and awareness-raising initiatives are well established and operate on a rolling basis.

2.3. The 2022 data tells us that, for actions in CSO 1, there is a high demand for training and technical assistance, there are also many training and technical assistance opportunities being offered. Therefore, the IWGs should focus on how best to avoid duplication of efforts, and how to pair up capacity-building requirements with offerings of support.

2.4. In 2022, technical assistance was requested for actions under CSO 1, CSO 5, CSO 4 and CSO 2 (in the order of highest to lowest number of requests). It should be noted that these are also the CSOs with the highest number of actions included in them (125, 50, 54 and 54 respectively). Technical assistance offers from relevant stakeholders were most frequent in CSO 1, CSO 4 and CSO 2, suggesting that, in 2022, there was a deficit in technical support for actions under CSO 5.

2.5. Training assistance was requested for actions under CSO 1, CSO 4, and CSO 2 (in the order of highest to lowest) in 2022. Whereas training offered in 2022 was fairly evenly distributed between CSO 1, CSO 2, CSO 5 and CSO 3. This suggests there is a deficit in training support for actions under CSO 4, and a slight surplus in training being offered under CSO 5.

2.6. Legal assistance was requested for actions under CSO 5, CSO 1, CSO 3 and CSO 2 (in the order of highest to lowest) in 2022. Whereas the offered support for legal assistance was much less frequent in 2022, with a total of just 9 activities across all CSOs seeking to provide legal assistance to Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in some form.

2.7. In 2022, across all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and CSOs, investment was the least frequently requested type of assistance, with a slightly higher request in CSO 1. There were not any activities offered by relevant stakeholders which offered investment to address actions.

### **Role and contribution of relevant stakeholders to the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031)**

2.8. There are a number of stakeholders in the Mediterranean, which are relevant to the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), each with their own role to play in delivering it's objectives. Relevant stakeholders are listed in Table 5, alongside a brief description of the role that they are fulfilling and a commentary on the level of active engagement with the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) to date. This list may not be fully comprehensive and there could be other relevant stakeholders in the Mediterranean that have a role to play in the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

**Table 5 Stakeholders for the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031)**

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Description of role</b>	<b>Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) involvement to date</b>
Cedre	International experts in accidental water pollution. Five main activities: response support, contingency planning, training, analysis and testing and research. Also a recognised resource centre.	Offering training opportunities and active support across all CSOs.
Cruise Lines International	Industry body, providing a unified voice for the global cruise community, alongside technical expertise, products and services to the cruise sector.	Attendance at conception meetings.

Association (CLIA)		Relevance to all CSOs
European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)	EU Agency to ensure a high, uniform and effective level of maritime safety, maritime security, prevention of, and response to, pollution caused by ships as well as response to marine pollution caused by oil and gas installations and, where appropriate, to contribute to the overall efficiency of maritime traffic and maritime transport.	Offering support to EU MS, and third party countries across all CSOs.
Federchimica	Industry body, seeking coordination and the protection of the role of the Italian chemical industry as well as the promotion of its development capacity.	Relevance to all CSOs
International Ocean Institute (IOI)	Independent, non-governmental non-profit organisation conducting training and capacity-building in ocean governance with the aim of creating knowledgeable ocean leaders.	Relevance to all CSOs
ITOPF	A not-for-profit organisation providing a wide range of technical services in addition to role of responding to ship-sourced spills. Its five key services are spill response, claims analysis and damage assessment, contingency planning and advisory work, training and education and information.	Focus on CSO 1
Ipieca	Industry body, global oil and gas association for advancing environmental and social performance across the energy transition.	Relevance to all CSOs
MedCruise	Industry body, to promote the cruise industry in the Mediterranean and its adjoining seas.	Relevance to all CSOs
OceanCare	International marine conservation organisation.	Focus on CSO 4 and CSO 7
Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL)	International industry-funded cooperative that exists to respond to oil spills wherever in the world they may occur, by providing preparedness, response and intervention services.	Focus on CSO 1
Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)	International organisation providing a platform for political dialogue and parliamentary cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean and Gulf regions.	Relevance to all CSOs
Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)	Regional organisation assisting Mediterranean coastal States in ratifying, transposing, implementing and enforcing international maritime conventions related to the prevention, preparedness and response to pollution from ships.	Focus on all CSOs  Secretariat of the biennial coordination meetings and of all IWGs

Sea Alarm	A public foundation seeking to encourage and create sustainable multi-stakeholder solutions that optimise preparedness for and response to marine emergencies.	Focus on CSO 1
Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)	Intergovernmental organisation that brings together 43 countries to strengthen regional cooperation and dialogue through specific projects and initiatives that address inclusive and sustainable development, stability and integration in the Euro-Mediterranean area.	Relevance to all CSOs
WestMED Initiative	Sustainable Blue Economy in the western Mediterranean. Five EU MS and five Southern Partner countries working together on shared interests for the region: to increase maritime safety and security, promote sustainable blue growth and jobs, and preserve ecosystems and biodiversity.	Relevance to all CSOs

2.9. There are many active and engaged institutions and organisations operating in the Mediterranean, each with the ability to contribute to delivering the various CSOs of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). However, work is being undertaken with a lack of coordination between institutions, and there is still considerable room for better coordination nationally, regionally and internationally.

### **Implementation status for each Common Strategic Objective (CSO)**

#### **CSO 1 - Prevent, prepare for, and respond to operational, illegal and accidental oil and HNS pollution from ships**

##### **Current status (2023 MED QSR)**

2.10. The [UNEP/MAP Mediterranean Quality Status Report 2023](#) (2023 MED QSR) concludes that, although any discharge into the sea of oil or oily mixture from the cargo area of an oil tanker is prohibited in the Mediterranean according to Annex I of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), operational pollution and, particularly, illicit discharges, are recognised as a major problem in the region.

2.11. The actions to deliver CSO 1 were considered by two of the IWGs, namely IWG-PREVENT, and IWG-RESPOND.

##### **Work underway and joint workplan (IWG-PREVENT)**

2.12. The first group, IWG-PREVENT, considered the Prevention of Oil and Chemical Pollution. Following discussions within the IWG-PREVENT, the following general observations can be made about the status of implementation of prevention actions under CSO 1:

- .1 In comparison to other areas of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), there are a lot of activities underway or planned on this topic for the next biennium, however there is a still a need for additional efforts to improve prevention of oil and chemical pollution in the Mediterranean Sea;



- .2 There are a number of resources of guidelines and standards developed and available, both at a national and regional level;
- .3 There are a number of offerings for capacity-building and training opportunities currently being delivered or being offered on a rolling basis; and
- .4 There is duplication in the activities being offered.

#### **Work underway and joint workplan (IWG-RESPOND)**

2.13. The second group, IWG-RESPOND, considered the Preparedness and Response to Oil and Chemical Pollution. Following discussions within the IWG-RESPOND, the following general observations can be made about the status of implementation of preparedness and response actions under CSO 1:

- .1 In comparison to other areas of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), there are a lot of activities underway or planned on this topic for the next biennium, however there is a still a need for additional efforts to increase preparedness and response to oil and chemical pollution in the Mediterranean Sea;
- .2 There are a number of resources of guidelines and standards developed and available, both at a national and regional level;
- .3 There are a number of offerings for capacity-building and training opportunities currently being delivered or being offered on a rolling basis;
- .4 There are a some opportunities for additional support available (as provided by relevant stakeholders) that have not been taken up (i.e. no direct requests have been made by Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention);
- .5 The geographical spread of implementation progress is not balanced. For some Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention , there is an indication that work is yet to commence on some of the actions of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031); and
- .6 There is limited progress on the actions related to ratification / transposition.

2.14. The full reports of IWG-PREVENT and IWG-Respond will be presented to the Second Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

#### **CSO 2 - Promote and support the development and implementation of innovative global solutions to mitigate and respond to climate change and CSO 3 - Reduce and monitor air emissions from ships to a level that is not harmful to the marine environment, or the health of the coastal population of the Mediterranean**

##### **Current status (2023 MED QSR)**

2.15. The [UNEP/MAP 2023 MED QSR](#) concludes that climate change is exacerbating already existing vulnerabilities in the Mediterranean region, with air and sea temperature likely to continue to increase more than the global average. The 2023 MED QSR highlights the role that ships emissions play in contributing to greenhouse gas emissions in the Mediterranean Sea, welcoming the recent designation of the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter (Med SOX ECA) that will enter in effective application in 2025 and limit ship emissions.

##### **Work underway and joint workplan (IWG-CCAS)**

2.16. The actions to deliver CSO 2 and CSO 3 were considered by the IWG-CCAS. Following the discussions within the IWG-CCAS, the following general observations can be made about the status of implementation of actions under CSO 2 and CSO 3:

- .1 There has been considerable progress under this CSO, namely through the joint and coordinated proposal for the designation of the proposed Med SOX ECA, and the associated establishment of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) Nitrogen Oxides (NOX) Emission Control Area (ECA)(s) Technical COMMITTEE of Experts;
- .2 In addition, there have been advancements in relevant EU Directives and Regulations on the use of renewable and alternative fuels, and their transportation into national laws by Mediterranean Coastal States has supported progress towards CSO 2 and CSO 3;
- .3 There are a number of activities being offered to Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention to deliver the priority actions under CSO 2 and CSO 3, many of which are newly developed / available; and
- .4 There are still a number of priority actions where there are no activities being offered to support Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention in delivering CSO 2 and CSO 3, namely those relating to monitoring, reporting and enforcement.

2.17. The full report of IWG-CCAS will be presented to the Second Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

#### **CSO 4 - Prevent and reduce litter (in particular plastic) entering the marine environment from ships, in order to limit the environmental, health, and socio-economic impact of marine litter in the Mediterranean**

##### **Current status (2023 MED QSR)**

2.18. The [UNEP/MAP 2023 MED QSR](#) concludes that, although most of the marine litter in the Mediterranean region originates from land-based sources, studies have confirmed that ship-originated litter are found at sites under major shipping routes. The 2023 MED QSR also particularly highlights the IMO Strategy to address marine plastic litter from ships, which aims to reduce marine plastic litter from shipping and improve the effectiveness of port reception facilities and treatment in the reduction of marine plastic litter.

##### **Work underway and joint workplan (IWG-LITTER)**

2.19. The actions to deliver CSO 4 were expected to be considered by the IWG-LITTER. However, the IWG-LITTER could not be operationalised, hence no discussion could be held within the IWG-LITTER. The following general observations can however be made about the status of implementation of actions under CSO 4:

- .1 There are a number of developments within the IMO, specifically related to the IMO-FAO-Norway GloLitter Partnerships Project, which have supported or plan to support activities in the Mediterranean to address marine litter originating from ships;
- .2 There are also synergies between the amended Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean and the IMO Action Plan/Strategy to address marine plastic litter from ships, which will support coordinated action being taken in the Mediterranean sea;

- .3 There are a number of activities relating to the improvement of Port Reception Facilities underway, which should also contribute to achieving CSO 4;
- .4 One of the challenges of addressing marine litter from ships is that it is often marine environmental departments within government bodies tasked with addressing litter rather than transport and shipping departments, therefore additional join up is needed within Contracting Parties to understand the issue and take steps to tackle the issue of marine litter from ships.

2.20. As IWG-LITTER could not be operationalised, no report will be presented to the Second Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

## **CSO 5 - Eliminate the introduction of non-indigenous species by shipping activities**

### **Current status (2023 MED QSR)**

2.21. The [UNEP/MAP 2023 MED QSR](#) concludes that non-indigenous species (NIS) are increasingly present in the Mediterranean Sea generating significant changes in the fauna and flora composition, mainly in the eastern Mediterranean. The 2023 MED QSR points to shipping (ballast waters and hull fouling) as one of the four main NIS introduction pathways, representing 29% of the total new species introduced.

### **Work underway and joint workplan (IWG-NIS)**

2.22. The actions to deliver CSO 5 were expected to be considered by the IWG-NIS. However, the IWG-NIS could not be operationalised, hence no discussion could be held within the IWG-NIS. The following general observations can however be made about the status of implementation of actions under CSO 5:

- .5 There are some activities available to support Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in achieving CSO 5, including targeted technical support for the ratification of the Ballast Water Management Convention as well as for the implementation of the 2011 Guidelines for the control and management of ships' biofouling to minimize the transfer of invasive aquatic species;
- .6 Technical groups (e.g. WestMed) exist on this topic, as do plans for a joint conference to share experiences and improve national expertise; and
- .7 The Mediterranean Sea has a focussed Ballast Water Management Strategy (2022-2027) which will undergo a mid-term review in the coming biennium, highlighting recommendations on the way forward.

2.23. As IWG-NIS could not be operationalised, no report will be presented to the Second Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

## **CSO 6 - Achieve a well-managed safe and pollution free Mediterranean, with integrated marine spatial planning and designation of special areas, where shipping activity has a limited impact upon the marine environment**

### **Current status (2023 MED QSR)**

2.24. Marine spatial planning and the designation of special areas are fundamental to the effective management of the Mediterranean sea basin, and therefore support all of the CSOs of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). In 2022, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) designated the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter (Med SOX ECA), pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI with an expected entry into effective application on 1 May 2025.

### **Work underway and joint workplan (IWG-MSP)**

2.25. The actions to deliver CSO 6 were considered by the IWG-MSP. Following the discussions within the IWG-MSP, the following general observations can be made about the status of implementation of actions under CSO 6:

- .1 There has been some notable progress under CSO 6, namely the production of a Guidance Document for the identification and designation of Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs) in relation to Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs), as well as the designation of the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter (Med SOX ECA);
- .2 In addition, there has been progress with the establishment of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) Nitrogen Oxides (NOX) Emission Control Area (ECA)(s) Technical Committee of Experts (NECA TCE), which will consider the possible designation of a Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Nitrogen Oxides (Med NOx ECA) under MARPOL Annex VI in due course; and
- .3 Furthermore, the North-Western Mediterranean Sea was designated as a PSSA at MEPC 80 (London, United Kingdom, 3-7 July 2023),

2.26. The full report of IWG-MSP will be presented to the Second Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

## **CSO 7 - Identify and understand collectively emerging issues related to pollution from ships in the Mediterranean, and define required actions to address issues identified**

### **Current status (2023 MED QSR)**

2.27. CSO 7 was defined to capture emerging issues, and work under this action has thus far focussed on the issues of impacts to the marine environment as a result of underwater noise from ships. The [UNEP/MAP 2023 MED QSR](#) concludes that there is a need to implement measures to prevent, reduce, and mitigate underwater noise emissions, taking into account well developed guidance (e.g. CMS, IMO, Oceans, ACCOBAMS, etc). The 2023 MED QSR points to a number of shipping related actions to address this issue, including:

- .1 To promote the application of vessel speed reductions by supporting for example ship speed limits in the proposed North-Western Mediterranean Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSA);

- .2 To support NETCCOBAMS<sup>1</sup> that would be a crucial tool for monitoring a compliance of the agreed measures, such as vessel speed, mapping temporal and geographical distribution and abundance of whales with comparable data on shipping routes and densities;
- .3 For marine traffic, the following noise related technologies and best available techniques (BATs) should be applied:
  - i. Minimise cavitation, e.g., better maintenance and optimising the propeller design;
  - ii. Slow steaming or reduce ship speed;
  - iii. Implement underwater noise management plans developed for individual vessels.

### **Work underway and joint workplan (IWG-NOISE)**

2.28. IWG-Noise considered activity underway in the Mediterranean region to address the issue of underwater noise from ships. It should however be noted that, as CSO 7 was intended to consider all new emerging issues, there were no specific actions defined to address the issue of underwater noise from ships, this was in some way limiting to the work of IWG-Noise, as there was limited guidance on the priority and focus of Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

2.29. Following the discussions within the IWG-Noise, the following general observations can be made about the status of action to address the issue of underwater noise from ships in the Mediterranean:

- .1 Collaborative working with a diverse range of stakeholders will be essential to tackle this issue; joining up with existing global programmes and initiatives will support this (such as the GEF-UNDP-IMO GloNoise Partnership);
- .2 Globally, there are increasing efforts to understand the environmental impact of underwater noise from ships. How this topic is considered in the Mediterranean Region must be discussed by Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in the context of the upcoming mid-term review of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031);
- .3 Currently, there are a limited number of recorded activities in the mediterranean that seek to address the issue of underwater noise from ships.

2.30. The full report of IWG-Noise will be presented to the Second Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

### **General remarks**

2.31. The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) was adopted in December 2021, and at the time of writing was two years and eight months into its nine year implementation period (just under 30% of the way through). In the first year after adoption (2022), work was undertaken to support six Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to develop National Action Plans to implement the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), alongside extensive analysis of the status of implementation of actions in those

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<sup>1</sup> Network on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the Adjacent Atlantic Area, developed by the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat in collaboration with WWF France and the GIS 3M.

six countries, and an analysis of the ongoing and future actions and projects of relevant stakeholders (15 stakeholders provided responses).

2.32. The results of the analysis were reported to the First Coordination Meeting. The implementation status in 2022 remains a useful indication of the level of activity currently being undertaken, and this has been further elaborated on (and supported) by discussions held within the IWGs. The following general observations can be made:

- .1 There are activities taking place, both within Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders, across all seven CSOs, with activities occurring against all actions in CSO 7 (in part due to the limited number of defined actions under that CSO). The CSO with the least number of activities occurring was CSO 6 (Marine Spatial Planning).
- .2 In general, the main focus for activities carried out by relevant stakeholders were under CSO 1, CSO 2 and CSO 3, with a lower focus on CSO 5, CSO 6 and CSO 7.
- .3 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention who had provided responses had recorded varying levels of progress, with some Contracting Parties indicating that no activity had commenced on a large proportion of the actions, this was still true at the time of writing in 2024.
- .4 The majority of activities identified to support the delivery of the actions in the Mediterranean Strategy were carried out by three stakeholders, namely REMPEC, EMSA, and, to a lesser extent, by the WestMED Initiative. The other stakeholders who submitted responses were instead focussed on more specific key areas, depending upon their expertise.
- .5 Some stakeholders indicated that although support was available, there had been no requests for support from relevant Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

2.33. Delivering the objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) relies on collaborative, coordinated and collective effort made by all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders in the Mediterranean. Equally, the success of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) is reliant on taking the required actions to deliver on the seven CSOs. To aid this, REMPEC will support the development of additional National Action Plans for the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy in 2024-2025, as detailed in the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget for 2024-2025 (Decision IG.26/14).

2.34. During the process of collecting data on the implementation status of all actions in 2022, concerns were raised by both Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders about the workload required to report on implementation status due to the large number of actions within the Action Plan associated to the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031). Therefore, the Biennial Review builds upon the results collected in 2022, and considers the additional input provided by the newly established IWGs to establish an overall status of implementation.

2.35. , Section 4 of the Biennial Review considers the implementation reporting workload requirements further and makes recommendations for consideration on this topic.

2.36. The process to establish the seven IWGs and the engagement in that process from Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders, has also highlighted a need to consider how the IWGs might operate best in future biennium. The following general observations can be made about the way in which the IWGs are operating:

- .1 Not all IWGs were able to become operationalised, this was partly due to time limitations, but was also due to a lack of leadership / ownership for the IWGs (namely IWG-Litter and IWG-NIS);
- .2 For the IWGs that were operationalised, 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 operationalised, 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 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;

2.37. The general observations above indicate that there is a need to consider the structure and approach taken by the IWGs to fulfil the objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

### **3. REVIEW OF THE KEY PROVISIONS AND GOALS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY (2022-2031)**

3.1. The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan will be reviewed and assessed in 2026, with a view to potentially adopting a revised Strategy in 2027. The Biennial Review begins to consider additional issues for consideration in readiness for the mid-term review, considering sufficiency of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) against the current understanding of additional issues.

#### **Cross reference with conclusions of the UNEP/MAP Mediterranean Quality Status Report 2023 (2023 MED QSR)**

##### **Prevention of accidental discharges and spills**

3.2. The [2023 MED QSR](#) concludes that, to address the environmental impacts of marine traffic and marine and port operations, there should be a focus on improving the technology of ships and port operations and of port infrastructure. The 2023 MED QSR encourages a focus on Best Available Techniques (BAT) and Best Environmental Practice (BEP) to ensure effective onboard and port pollution control facilities, and to prevent accidental discharges and spillages. This appears to be sufficiently reflected in the aims and objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

##### **Marine Spatial Planning**

3.3. The 2023 MED QSR continues to encourage the designation of restricted areas for anchorage and protection of sensitive areas for marine traffic. This is not explicitly considered in the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), but could be captured under the objectives of CSO 6, and considered by the IWG-MSP.

3.4. The following is written in regard to the Med SOX ECA: “Implementation of the measures related to the designation of the Mediterranean Sea as a Sulphur emission control area (SECA) is expected to generate significant benefits in both pollution reduction and ecosystem protection.

However, the introduction of exhaust gas cleaning systems EGCS – scrubbers on ships in the Mediterranean, as alternative abatement technology for air emission of Sulphur region, may generate a new stream of shipping liquid wastes, in which metals and PAH discharges dominate from ships, that is the chemical air pollution transferred and transformed into marine pollution. This is because the use of open- loop EGCS on ships might be conflicting with Article 195 of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea UNCLOS i.e., "duty not to transfer damage or hazards or transform one type of pollution into another", whereas scrubber equipped vessels accept to transfer and to transform air pollution into marine pollution". This issue of open-loop scrubbers should be considered further by the relevant IWG.



## **Cross reference with the work of other regional and international organisations**

### **Marine litter**

3.5. The IMO is considering a number of new and emerging issues. Those of relevance to the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) are listed below:

- .1 consideration of marine litter in dredged material, sewage sludge and industrial discharges;
- .2 consideration of End-of-life management of fibre reinforced plastic (FRP) vessels: alternatives to at sea disposal; and
- .3 hull scrapings, marine coatings and anti-fouling systems as potential sources of microplastics to the oceans

3.6. The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) includes CSO 4 dedicated to marine litter (in particular plastic), and each of the above topics could be considered within that area of work. The IWG-LITTER should consider these topics and the need for coordinated action, or equally the need to collaborate with / support action under the updated [Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean](#).

3.7. Since the writing of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), the IMO has also (in 2021) adopted its Strategy to address marine plastic litter from ships. The Strategy sets out the ambitions to reduce marine plastic litter generated from, and retrieved by, fishing vessels; reduce shipping's contribution to marine plastic litter; and improve the effectiveness of port reception and facilities and treatment in reducing marine plastic litter. The Strategy sets a vision to "strengthen the international framework and compliance with the relevant IMO instruments, endeavouring to achieve zero plastic waste discharges to sea from ships by 2025".

3.8. The IMO will be organising education and training opportunities, targeted technical cooperation and capacity-building to implement its marine litter strategy through the IMO-FAO-Norway GloLitter Partnerships Project, and the IWG-LITTER should make efforts to stay abreast of these developments and identify opportunities to capitalise on these developments.

3.9. OSPAR's Second Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (OSPAR Agreement 2022-05) (RAP ML 2) includes an action to 'reduce microplastics from ship greywater discharges' (Action B.1.2). The action aims to collect and review existing research with regards to greywater discharges from ships, possibly also conducting local research based on sampling and assessing the local impacts of the greywater, and to identify potential measures to reduce greywater discharges from ships.

3.10. OSPAR's RAP ML 2 also includes an action to 'manage end-of-life recreational vessels' (Action B.2.1), which will help tackle marine litter from end of life (EOL) recreational vessels by developing a methodology to estimate the quantity, distribution and material composition of EOL recreational vessels; developing guidance to support waste management of EOL recreational vessels and collating Contracting Party EOL recreational vessel inventory returns to provide an estimate for the OSPAR region.

3.11. In addition, the OSPAR RAP ML 2 includes an action to 'identify the need for measures to reduce the unintentional release of microplastics resulting from paint, anti-fouling paint and other marine coatings used by commercial marine vessels' (Action B.3.1). Marine coatings are used by vessels to protect from corrosion and bio-fouling and contain plastic polymers, chemicals polymer

additives, biocides and heavy metals. The application, maintenance and use of these coatings while at sea or in shipyards risk environmental impact in our seas given the presence of both plastic and additives. A holistic approach to reducing impact from use of these coatings would incorporate an assessment of the distribution and scale of marine coating use, and resulting micro-plastic and contaminant releases. The assessment would inform future potential prevention and mitigation measures.

3.12. HELCOM's Revised Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (HELCOM Recommendation 42-43/3) includes an action to 'investigate the problem with cargo losses causing plastic littering of the marine environment and, based on the findings, together with national competent authorities, consider developing a common guidelines for accident management taking into account ongoing work within the IMO and EU' (Action RS4). In addition, HELCOM's RAP ML includes an action to 'investigate the problem caused by spills of plastic pellets from ships and, based on the findings, consider developing common guidelines for accident management in such events' (RS5).

3.13. Finally, HELCOM's RAP ML includes an action to 'Cooperate with maritime stakeholders to optimize onboard waste management enhancing separation, fostering recycling, and phasing out the use of single-use plastics in shipping, including in cruise operations' (RS3).

3.14. Each of the topic areas referenced in the paragraphs above could be incorporated in to the work to achieve CSO 4, and IWG-Litter should consider where efforts could be best directed in the Mediterranean Region.

### **Underwater Noise**

3.15. The Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 80) in 2023 approved revised Guidelines for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life. Furthermore, the GEF-UNDP-IMO GloNoise Partnership Project has an overall objective to establish a truly global stakeholders' partnership, with a strong developing countries focus, in order to deal with the major environmental issue of underwater noise from shipping. The project assists developing countries and regions to raise awareness, build capacity and collect information to assist the policy dialogue on anthropogenic underwater noise mitigation from shipping.

3.16. There is increasing focus on the impacts of underwater noise from shipping, and consequently a need for Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to consider how this issue should be addressed in the Mediterranean region, in the context of the revision of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) following its mid-term review.

### **Alternative fuels**

3.17. The Low Carbon GIA partnership produced an assessment which concluded that Ammonia, hydrogen, ethane and Dimethyl Ether (DME) are among the "alternative" marine fuels which may need future regulatory work within the IMO. The Low Carbon GIA is a public-private partnership that operates under the framework of the IMO-Norway GreenVoyage2050 Project. The aim of the Low Carbon GIA is to develop innovative solutions to address common barriers to decarbonising the shipping sector. Alternative fuels are not specifically considered in the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), therefore this should be discussed by the IWG-CCAS and considered under the work to implement the actions of CSO 2 and CSO 3.

## **Ship Scrubbers**

3.18. The OSPAR Convention is currently considering the issue of discharges from Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems (EGCS), also known as scrubbers, which are used onboard ships as an alternative way to comply with current limits regarding sulphur oxide (SOX) emissions. There is growing concern that discharges from wide-scale use of EGCS pose a threat to the marine environment, by moving the pollution from air to sea, and OSPAR Contracting Parties are considering potential measures to manage discharges from ships scrubbers, including a phased ban on discharges from EGCS.

## **New generation fuel spills**

3.19. The Bonn Agreement is considering new generation fuels, looking at the environmental impacts of new generation low sulphur MARine fuel Oil Spills, and acquiring further knowledge of environmental impacts of Ultra-Low Sulphur Fuel Oil (ULSFO) / Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oil (VLSFO) spills. This has been supported by the IMAROS project (Improving response capacities and understanding the environmental impacts of new generation low sulphur MARine fuel Oil Spills), which is an EU funded project coordinated by the Norwegian Coastal Administration with partners from Belgium, Denmark, France, Malta and Sweden. Two of the partner countries are also Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, and the findings of this work could be further considered within the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) by the IWG-RESPOND.

# **4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **Conclusions**

4.1. The Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) is approximately 30 percent of the way through its implementation period. 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.

4.2. 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”.

4.3. The Biennial Review has also highlighted concerns raised around the workload required to report on progress of the actions in the Action Plan associated with the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), due to the number of discrete actions included. Although by reporting against each action a very accurate picture of progress can be gathered, it may be preferable to reconsider the reporting approach and the number of actions in the Action Plan associated with the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

## **Recommendations**

4.4. This review has identified a number of recommendations for the Second Coordination Meeting, to strengthen the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

- .1 There is a need for greater ownership of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and the actions to deliver the seven CSOs amongst Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders;
- .2 There is also a need for greater recognition of the ambition behind the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), i.e. that this is not a REMPEC led strategy, but a strategy for all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders, and its success is dependent on taking collective action to address ship source pollution in the Mediterranean;
- .3 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders should support and encourage active engagement in the IWGs;
- .4 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention should consider the specific and targeted recommendations on the work recommended as set out in the reports of the IWGs;
- .5 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention should consider the IWGs required to support the delivery of the various CSOs, and if there is a need to combine existing groups (for example to have a unique IWG for CSO 1 instead of the current 2 groups: IWG-PREVENT and IWG-RESPOND due to overlapping and duplication of efforts), or if there is a need to revisit the ToRs for all of the IWG to ensure they are able to be operationalised and support the delivery of the CSOs;
- .6 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders should consider the upcoming opportunity to define new CSOs during the mid-term review of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031);
- .7 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and relevant stakeholders should consider the reporting approach and additional division of actions in the reporting format of the Action Plan associated to the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), seeking to manage the expected workload of reporting on the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) in future biennium;
- .8 Contracting Parties should consider how the IWGs could be organised so that they are able to review and update the Action Plan and related actions, to discuss identified support needs raised by Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, alongside activities being organised / offered by relevant stakeholders (including training opportunities, funding, and capacity-building), considering how best to raise awareness of existing opportunities, and also how to highlight requirements for additional support, towards better implementation of the actions of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031);
- .9 Contracting Parties should take note of the work being undertaken in other regional and international organisations, considering if there is a need to revisit any of the CSOs of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) to reflect developments in understanding in readiness for the mid-term review; and
- .10 To support better coordination nationally, regionally and internationally, relevant stakeholders should regularly engage in the IWGs set up under the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

## **ANNEX 1 – LIST OF INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUPS**

Intersessional Working Group on Prevention of Oil and Chemical Pollution (CSO 1) (IWG-Prevent)

Intersessional Working Group on Preparedness and Response to Oil and Chemical Pollution (CSO 1) (IWG-Respond)

Intersessional Working Group on climate change and air emissions from ships (CSO 2 and CSO 3) (IWG-CCAS)

Intersessional Working Group on Marine Litter from Ships (CSO 4) (IWG-LIT)

Intersessional Working Group on Non-Indigenous Species (CSO 5) (IWG-NIS)

Intersessional Working Group on Marine Spatial Planning and Designation of Special Areas (CSO 6) (IWG-MSP)

Intersessional Working Group on Underwater Noise from Ships (CSO 7) (IWG-Noise)