



Mediterranean
Action Plan
Barcelona
Convention



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

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

REMPEC/WG.58/5
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Agenda item 5: Priority actions for the biennium 2026-2027 and beyond

Summary of recommendations and suggested priorities for the next biennium, as identified by the Intersessional Working Groups of the Mediterranean Strategy 2022-2031

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Note by the Secretariat

The Mediterranean Strategy 2022-2031 was adopted in December 2021. 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).

This document seeks to highlight the recommendations and suggested priorities from the IWGs for the next biennium, in the context of preparation for the upcoming mid-term review of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), and the determination of priority actions for the elaboration of the PoW 2026-2027 and assist relevant national, regional and international organisations, institutions and agencies, and REMPEC Partners, in the definition of their respective programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUPS AND SUGGESTED PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT BIENNIUM

Introduction

1 REMPEC/WG.58/2/1 provides a summary of the initial reports of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) Intersessional Working Groups (IWGS) that were operationalised in the period between 2022 – 2024.

2 This document summarises the recommendations and suggested priorities identified by the IWGs. The Terms of Reference for each IWG and the final IWG Reports (with joint workplans annexed) are presented in document REMPEC/WG.58/ INF.2.

IWG-PREVENT

3 A detailed and extensive report from the IWG is presented in REMPEC/WG.58/ INF.2, however, the priority areas of action, next steps and recommendations from the IWG are also reproduced below for ease of access.

Priority areas of action:

- .1 The priority areas of actions remain unchanged;
- .2 Based on the outcome of the First Coordination Meeting, it is evident that the work in the field of illicit ship pollution discharges during the biennium 2024-2025 should take the following into consideration:
 - to continue the cooperation between REMPEC, EMSA and the RAMOGE Agreement with respect to illicit ship pollution discharges, notably:
 - the availability of CSN services by EMSA offered to CPs;
 - the importance of real time surveillance through the Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) or manned aerial means and AIS Maritime Traffic Live Ships Map for identification of potential polluters;
 - the ongoing work of the MENELAS with respect to: (i) the common marine oil pollution detection/investigation report; (ii) the criteria for a common minimum level of fines for each offense provided for under the Annexes to MARPOL; (iii) the modalities of possible creation and operation, including in terms of governance and financing, of a regional “Blue Fund”; and
 - the participation of CPs in OSCAR-MED and the possible further practical use of the common marine oil pollution detection/investigation report.
 - to stress the need for judicial cooperation, possibly through the Union des Procureurs généraux de la Méditerranée (UPGM);

- to highlight the need for CPs to report illicit ship pollution discharges, as appropriate; and
- to stress the necessity to follow up on the revision of the EU Ship-Source Pollution Directive.

Next steps for the IWG-PREVENT

- .1 Enhanced representation in the IWG-PREVENT: The composition of the IWG-PREVENT (currently 8 CPs out of 22, and 5 relevant stakeholders in addition to REMPEC in its capacity of IWG-PREVENT coordinator) should be broadened by possibly re-inviting CPs and relevant stakeholders as well as extending invitations to additional relevant stakeholders who meet the required criteria. Representation of all CPs and relevant stakeholders should be ensured to succeed in the implementation of CSO 1 of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan with a focus on illicit ship pollution discharges.
- .2 Increased contribution to the work of the IWG-PREVENT: Nominated experts serving on the IWG-PREVENT should contribute, as far as practicable and in a timely manner, to the work of the IWG-PREVENT with a view to ensuring its regional dimension. Participation by all CPs and relevant stakeholders should be ensured to succeed in the implementation of CSO 1 of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan with a focus on illicit ship pollution discharges.
- .3 Steering the work of the IWG-PREVENT: Whilst the Secretariat (REMPEC) may be able to steer the work of the IWG-PREVENT, it seems preferable that it is led by either a CP or a relevant stakeholder. Although it is involved, as a relevant stakeholder, in the implementation of all CSOs of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), the role of REMPEC is essentially that of the Secretariat of the biennial coordination meetings and of all IWGs.
- .4 Adoption of the ToRs for the IWG-PREVENT: Whilst ToRs for the IWG-PREVENT were prepared by the Secretariat (REMPEC), it seems advisable that these are adopted, as possibly amended, by the Second Coordination Meeting. Should the IWG-PREVENT be re-established by the said meeting, its tasks till the Third Coordination Meeting should be clearly defined, together with the related timeline.
- .5 Future updating of the Joint Workplan for the IWG-PREVENT: Not all the actions identified as having a “high priority” under the Action Plan associated to the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) were included in the Joint Workplan for the IWG-PREVENT because the actions listed in Section 1,2 and 3 thereof are the ones that were identified during the First Coordination Meeting. This approach may need to be reconsidered since many actions having a “high priority” are left out whilst relevant activities are carried out by CPs and relevant stakeholders. Moreover, the way some of the actions are included in the Joint Workplan for the IWG-PREVENT is not clear enough given that it does not include verbs or a clear description of what the action is or what needs to be done. Some renumbering appears to have been also made (e.g. adding a) or i) after the action number) compared to the numbering in the Action Plan

associated to the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), which is confusing. These elements will need to be considered in the future.

- .6 Avoiding duplication of work between the IWG-PREVENT and IWG-RESPOND: There are areas of action that are covered by the work of both the IWG-PREVENT and the IWG-RESPOND. The related Joint Workplans also originally listed the same actions in some instances, which brought confusion as to which IWG these actions related to. Duplication of efforts should be avoided, while synergy should be achieved by ensuring the necessary coordination between the IWG-PREVENT and IWG-RESPOND. It may be beneficial to consider having a unique IWG covering CSO 1, hence joining IWG-PREVENT and IWG-RESPOND to alleviate this situation.

Recommendations and conclusions from IWG-PREVENT

- .7 The IWG-PREVENT stressed that operational pollution and, particularly, illicit ship pollution discharges, are recognised as a major problem in the Mediterranean region. Hence, the implementation of CSO 1 of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan with a focus on illicit ship pollution discharges is paramount.
- .8 The above-mentioned next steps for the IWG-PREVENT, which may apply to other IWGs, should be considered by the Second Coordination Meeting.
- .9 The updated Joint Workplan proposed by the IWG-PREVENT should also be considered by the Second Coordination Meeting, bearing in mind the limited contribution received on its update.
- .10 The Second Coordination Meeting should decide on the future of the IWG-PREVENT and on how to proceed with the relevant work.

IWG-RESPOND

- 4 A detailed and extensive report from the IWG is presented in REMPEC/WG.58/ INF.2, however, the priority areas of action and recommendations from the IWG are also reproduced below for ease of access. There were no next steps identified by IWG-RESPOND.

Priority areas of action:

- .1 some of the actions are both included in IWG-RESPOND and IWG-PREVENT workplans (for example Section 2/Action No 1.12.3 Oiled Wildlife Response Manual (POSOW, 2013) or Section 2/Action No 1.3.3c exercises where previously identified lessons are tackled with new approaches). The Secretariat should clarify which group will pursue the implementation.
- .2 some actions from the Strategy Action Plan are not reflected into the IWG-RESPOND Work Plan, nor in the IWG-PREVENT Work Plan (actions 1.3.1 and 1.3.2 about

national/sub-regional/regional/ international exercises, action 1.3.4). Not all the actions classified with a “high priority” in the Strategy Action Plan have been included in the IWGs workplans.

- .3 One Contracting Party to the Barcelona Convention confirmed that the actions that have been identified as priority areas of action at the First Coordination Meeting should be considered as such.

Recommendations and conclusions from IWG-RESPOND

- .1 It is crucial to seek synergies with existing initiatives/resources and to identify such initiatives/resources.
- .2 IWG-RESPOND recommends reviewing the way IWG-RESPOND works and suggests organizing another online meeting with IWG coordinators to seek their feedback.
- .3 IWG-RESPOND would suggest clarifying how to concretely implement the planned actions: how to ensure that Mediterranean countries benefit from the results of projects funded by external resources and how to involve them in ongoing initiatives.

IWG-CCAS

- 5 A detailed and extensive report from the IWG is presented in REMPEC/WG.58/ INF.2, however, the priority areas of action, next steps and recommendations from the IWG are also reproduced below for ease of access.

Priority areas of action:

- .4 In order to facilitate the entry into effect of the Med SOX ECA on 1 May 2025, a priority area of action is to support the ratification and effective implementation of MARPOL Annex VI. Both technical support and capacity-building activities should be provided to CPs, which so request, to ratify and effectively implement MARPOL Annex VI. As reported in the joint workplan, three CPs will benefit from these activities by the end of 2024.
- .5 Based on the activities offered to date by the CPs and relevant stakeholders, another priority area of action is the reduction of emissions in ports through both projects and capacity-building activities. Several activities also concern the reduction of emissions (not only GHG) from ships and it is foreseen that they will continue in the following years.

Next steps for the IWG-CCAS

- .1 Enhance participation: It is important to broaden the composition of the IWG by re-inviting CPs and relevant stakeholders as well as by extending invitations to additional members who meet the required criteria. Participation of all CPs and relevant stakeholders should be ensured if we intend to succeed in the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

- .2 Reflect on how the IWG should continue its work: The second Coordination Meeting should decide if and/or how the IWG should continue its work. In the positive, the IWG should be provided with terms of reference that cover the entire biennium between the Second and Third Coordination Meeting on the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).

Recommendations and conclusions from IWG-CCAS

- .1 The composition of the IWG needs to be extended to ensure greater representation of CPs. The IWG stressed also the importance of having all relevant stakeholders represented in the IWG in order to ensure the necessary collaborations for a successful implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), which relies on the coordinated and synergic efforts of all relevant entities since its adoption.
- .2 Having in mind the expected date of entry into effect of the Med SOX ECA on 1 May 2025, the Second Coordination Meeting shall be a unique opportunity to discuss on further actions to support the ratification and effective implementation of MARPOL Annex VI.
- .3 The activities proposed by the IWG to cover the current gaps need to be considered by the Second Coordination Meeting, in order to eventually start exploring how to implement them.
- .4 The IWG recommends that the Second Coordination Meeting should decide on the future of the group and on how to proceed with the relevant work.

IWG-MSP

- 6 A detailed and extensive report from the IWG is presented in REMPEC/WG.58/ INF.2, however, the priority areas of action, next steps and recommendations from the IWG are also reproduced below for ease of access.

Priority areas of action:

- .1 The priority areas of actions remain unchanged;
- .2 In order to facilitate the effective entry into application of the Med SOX ECA on 1 May 2025, a priority area of action is to support the ratification and effective implementation of MARPOL Annex VI. Both technical support and capacity-building activities should be provided to CPs, which so request, to ratify and effectively implement MARPOL Annex VI. As reported in the Joint Workplan, three CPs will benefit from these activities by the end of 2024. Next steps for the IWG-MSP

Next steps for the IWG-MSP

- .1 Enhanced representation in the IWG-MSP: The composition of the IWG-MSP (currently 6 CPs out of 22, and 6 relevant stakeholders in addition to REMPEC in its capacity of IWG-MSP coordinator) should be broadened by possibly re-inviting CPs

and relevant stakeholders as well as extending invitations to additional relevant stakeholders who meet the required criteria. Representation of all CPs and relevant stakeholders should be ensured to succeed in the implementation of CSO 6 of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan with a focus on Marine Spatial Planning and Designation of Special Areas.

- .2 Increased contribution to the work of the IWG-MSP: Nominated experts serving on the IWG-MSP should contribute, as far as practicable and in a timely manner, to the work of the IWG-MSP with a view to ensuring its regional dimension. Participation by all CPs and relevant stakeholders should be ensured to succeed in the implementation of CSO 6 of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) and its Action Plan with a focus on Marine Spatial Planning and Designation of Special Areas.
- .3 Steering the work of the IWG-MSP: Whilst the Secretariat (REMPEC) may be able to steer the work of the IWG-MSP, it seems preferable that it is led by either a CP or a relevant stakeholder. Although it is involved, as a relevant stakeholder, in the implementation of all CSOs of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), the role of REMPEC is essentially that of the Secretariat of the biennial coordination meetings and of all IWGs.
- .4 Adoption of the ToRs for the IWG-MSP: Whilst ToRs for the IWG-MSP were prepared by the Secretariat (REMPEC), it seems advisable that these are adopted, as possibly amended, by the Second Coordination Meeting. Should the IWG-MSP be re-established by the said meeting, its tasks till the Third Coordination Meeting should be clearly defined, together with the related timeline.
- .5 Coordination between the IWG-MSP and the IWG-CCAS: There are areas of action that are covered by the work of both the IWG-MSP and the IWG-CCAS. One such is the designation of special areas under MARPOL, which is a priority area of action both under 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) and CSO 6. Duplication of efforts should be avoided, while synergy should be achieved by ensuring the necessary coordination between the IWG-MSP and the IWG-CCAS.

Recommendations and conclusions from IWG-MSP

- .1 The IWG-MSP stresses that Marine Spatial Planning and the Designation of Special Areas are fundamental to the effective management of the Mediterranean sea basin, and therefore support all CSOs of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).
- .2 The above-mentioned next steps for the IWG-MSP, which may apply to other IWGs, should be considered by the Second Coordination Meeting.
- .3 The updated Joint Workplan proposed by the IWG-MSP should also be considered by the Second Coordination Meeting, bearing in mind the limited contribution received on its update.
- .4 The Second Coordination Meeting should decide on the future of the IWG-MSP and on how to proceed with the relevant work.

IWG-Noise

- 7 A detailed and extensive report from the IWG is presented in REMPEC/WG.58/ INF.2, however, the priority areas of action, next steps and recommendations from the IWG are also reproduced below for ease of access.

Priority areas of action:

- .1 The IWG-NOISE has so far focused exclusively on the continuous underwater noise from ships, therefore the priority activities proposed are within the framework of this issue: (see section F of this document).
- .2 Other new and emerging issues not covered by other IWGs may need to be considered in the future by the IWG-NOISE that would then need to be renamed accordingly to reflect this.

Next steps for the IWG-Noise

- .1 Schedule Quarterly Meetings for the IWG-NOISE: Organize four regular meetings throughout the year, i.e. one at the start of each quarter to ensure consistent progress and coordination.
- .2 Enhance Participation: Broaden the group's composition by re-inviting CPs and relevant stakeholders as well as extending invitations to additional members who meet the required criteria.
- .3 Execute Approved Activities: Implement the activities outlined in the Joint Workplan that would be submitted to the Second Coordination Meeting, for consideration, focusing on the recommendations provided below.

Recommendations and conclusions from IWG-Noise

- .1 The composition of the group needs to be extended to ensure greater representation of CPs and relevant stakeholders.
- .2 Very limited ongoing activities were reported. There is a need and great potential to develop activities in all "areas of influence" to address underwater radiated noise from shipping.
- .3 A need to advance in the harmonization of measures for measuring underwater noise was identified.
- .4 Importance of taking advantage of other environmental benefits that could be achieved through the implementation of different technical and operational measures to reduce underwater radiated noise from shipping.
- .5 Establishment of regular meetings: The IWG-NOISE recommends holding regular meetings throughout the year, i.e. one at the start of each quarter to coordinate joint activities and ensure consistency. Additionally, extraordinary meetings may be

convened for special occasions, such as presentations, upon prior consultation with the IWG-NOISE members.

- .6 The IWG-NOISE recommends adjusting the Action Plan associated to the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) regarding continuous underwater noise from shipping under CSO 7, making some specific proposals for actions to be included in the Action Plan (see full report in REMPEC/WG.58/ INF.2).

Action Requested

8 The Second Coordination Meeting is invited to consider recommendations from the IWGs and suggested priorities for the next biennium, in the context of preparation for the upcoming mid-term review of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031).