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**Joint Cooperation Strategy on Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity
among the Secretariats of ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-Med, UNEP/MAP through SPA/RAC and in
collaboration with MedPAN**

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UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2016

**Joint Cooperation Strategy on
Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity among the
Secretariats of ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-Med, UNEP/MAP through SPA/RAC and in
collaboration with MedPAN**

Considering the need of facilitating effective conservation and sustainable use of the Mediterranean marine biodiversity, as required by their respective mandates and with special emphasis on open sea¹ areas, including deep sea² (herein after referred to as “open sea”);

Recognising that the challenges facing marine ecosystems, including in Mediterranean open seas, require effective monitoring and development of spatial-based protection and management measures;

Recalling the common vision, the Mediterranean Ecological Objectives and the Good Environmental Status descriptions and targets, as defined in the Decisions of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention on the Ecosystems Approach (Decisions IG. 17/6, IG. 20/ 4, IG. 21/3 and IG. 22/7);

Considering the on-going work for the establishment of an instrument on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction under the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);

Building on, where available, the bilateral Memoranda of Understanding signed by the Partners, and in particular those addressing spatial-based management and conservation measures;

The Secretariats of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the International Union for Conservation of Nature Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med), and the United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) through its Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) , herein after referred to as “the Partners”, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Mediterranean Protected Areas Network (MedPAN) agree on the following Joint Cooperation Strategy:

1 Objectives

The overall aim of the Joint Cooperation Strategy is to contribute to the achievement of SDG 14, in particular 14.2, 14.5, 14.7 to be achieved in the Mediterranean; and that the application of the precautionary principle and of the Ecosystem Approach is strengthened in a coordinated manner.

In particular, the objectives of the Joint Cooperation Strategy are that:

- (1) the conservation and the sustainable use of the open sea in the Mediterranean are ensured through the best available knowledge and the application of the precautionary principle and the Ecosystem Approach;
- (2) the activities undertaken by the concerned Partners in relation to the spatial-based management and conservation in the open sea in the Mediterranean are harmonised and complement each other.

2 Areas of Cooperation

The Partners, in line with the individual mandates, strategies and Programmes of Work of their respective Organizations will cooperate to:

¹ Open sea: Term adaptation to the Mediterranean Sea from “Open ocean” defined by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission as a non-legal term commonly understood by scientists to refer to the water column beyond the continental shelf, in other words, non-coastal. Open ocean may occur in areas within national jurisdiction in States with a narrow continental shelf (GFCM: SAC13/2011/Inf.10)

²) Deep sea: Sea water column below 200 m. It is a fully aphotic zone (GFCM: SAC13/2011/Inf.10).

- (1) Collect and exchange information to identify priority areas that could be protected or managed in a coordinated manner;
- (2) Identify and fulfil gaps in information still needed to initiate the process of protecting a specific area;
- (3) Assist interested countries in a coordinated manner in declaring intent/interest of protecting a specific area and on the process to do so;
- (4) Assist interested countries in a coordinated manner to:
 - (i) elaborate the designation files;
 - (ii) undertake national consultation processes in case need be;
 - (iii) finalize the designation files including the agreed area based conservation and management measures;
 - (iv) undertake the official designation of SPAMI and/or FRA or other area-based conservation and/or management measures;
- (5) Address follow up actions in a coordinated manner

3 Modalities of Cooperation

A Coordination Committee is established under this Joint Cooperation Strategy, made of a representative of each Partner and with the rotating Chairing among the Secretariats, with the following roles and responsibilities:

- (i) Steer the strategic process and develop options for the Areas of Cooperation, as described in point 2 above;
- (ii) Establish a time frame for implementing the strategic action described under point 2 above, and agree on role-sharing among the Partners, in line with their mandates and comparative advantages;
- (iii) Foster and promote coordinated outreach, public awareness and scientific research and observation, and liaise with other appropriate organisations (such as IMO);
- (iv) Facilitate the information among Partners on new areas registered, as well as on any change regarding the border or status of an area previously registered;
- (v) Advise the regular established evaluation processes of the status of the areas;
- (vi) Undertake, after common consultation, other tasks as may be deemed appropriate in line with the individual mandates, strategies and Programmes of Work of their respective Organizations.

4 Implementation Aspects

The practical arrangements for the implementation of this Cooperation Strategy, including financing of the modalities and areas of cooperation will be discussed in the first meeting of the Coordination Committee, in line with the Partners' mandates and financial rules. If necessary, joint efforts will be undertaken to mobilize resources for activities foreseen under point 2, without additional financial burden to the respective Organizations of the Partners.

5 Reporting

Each Partner will inform its respective governing body on the implementation of this Joint Cooperation Strategy.

6 Participation

This Joint Cooperation Strategy is open for the participation of any other relevant and interested International or Regional Organization, provided its participation is approved by all the Partners.