

REPORT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA SUB-REGIONAL COORDINATION UNIT INCLUDING ACTIVITIES FROM NON-PARTIES



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Implementation of Actions By UNEP- MAP SPA/RAC for the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean (*September 2022 -September 2025*)

Within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding SPA/RAC - ACCOBAMS Secretariat, signed in Monaco on 8 August 2023 for the period 2023-2025, the joint work programme has been updated with specific activities and incorporated into a new MoU signed in March 2025.

1. Evaluation and update of the Action plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean:

The Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea adopted by Decision IG.25/13 during COP22 (Antalya, Turkey 2021) will be evaluated and updated during the next biennium (2026-2027) in close collaboration with the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS and submitted for adoption by COP 25.

2. Advance the implementation of Ecosystem Approach in the Mediterranean and IMAP in coherence with regional and global developments

SPA/RAC has worked closely with national institutions to support the implementation of national IMAP monitoring programmes in six countries (Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia) through the EU-funded IMAP-MPA and EcAp-MED III projects, which ended in 2023 and 2024 respectively. These efforts enabled integrated monitoring in pilot sites, harmonized methods, capacity building, and contributions to the 2023 MED QSR elaboration. Two new EU-funded initiatives — SEMPA and EcAp-Med Plus — were launched in 2023 and 2024, respectively, to provide continued support until 2027 in advancing Good Environmental Status.

The Barcelona CoP 23 (Portoroz, Slovenia, 5-8 December 2023) took note of [the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report \(2023 MED QSR\)](#) (UNEP/MED IG.26/Inf.10) and endorsed its provisional Executive Summary (Decision IG.26/3) and a Summary for Policy Makers (SfPM).

As a contribution to the biodiversity (EO1) and non-indigenous species (EO2) chapters of the 2023 MED QSR, six thematic assessment reports—covering benthic habitats, cetaceans, the Mediterranean monk seal, seabirds, marine turtles, and non-indigenous species—were developed by the SPA/RAC. These reports were discussed during the CORMON Meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries (Athens, Greece, 9–10 March 2023), the Integrated CORMON Meeting (Athens, Greece, 27–28 June 2023), and the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group Meeting (Istanbul, 11 September 2023), where ACCOBAMS Secretariat representative took part.

It should be noted that the ASI data were among the main data sources used for the assessment of the state of cetaceans (GES assessment) under EcAp/IMAP EO1, that foremostly focused on the three common Indicators (CI): CI3 – Species distribution, CI4 – Population abundance and CI5 – Population demographic characteristics.

3. Review and update of the common indicators factsheets related to Biodiversity (EO1) and fisheries (EO3)

A proposed approach for updating the Common Indicator Factsheets related to Biodiversity (EO1), Non-Indigenous Species (EO2), and Fisheries (EO3), as well as updating the Data Dictionaries and Data Standards for CI 1 and 2 (Benthic

Habitats), CI 3, 4, and 5 (Marine Mammals, Marine Turtles, and Seabirds), and CI 24 (Marine Litter), was developed respectively by SPA/RAC, GFCM, and INFO/RAC, and presented at the last Biodiversity and fisheries CORMON Meeting (Athens, Greece, 7-8 April 2025).

4. The Post-2020 SAPBIO

SPA/RAC launched the mid-term assessment of the Post-2020 SAPBIO, focusing on startup activities and the elaboration of the simplified monitoring tables for national and regional actions and the framework for the future assessment of the collective implementation planned for expected results for 2027 and 2030. This process were conducted in close consultation with the Post-2020 Advisory Committee and were presented and reviewed during the Eleventh meeting of the Post-2020 SAPBIO National Correspondents (Athens, Greece 9-10 April 2025 and the Seventeenth Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points (Istanbul, Türkiye, 20-22 May 2025).

5. Enhancing of effective conservation on cetacean critical habitats

The Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) Terms of Reference were updated, and its composition was renewed, following the validation by the SPA/BD Focal Points. AGEM convened two meetings by teleconference in 2025. The draft Guidance on Other Effective area-based Conservation measures (OECM) and criteria application in the Mediterranean in the Mediterranean was developed in close collaboration with the AGEM and presented to the 17th meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points.

The Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) Evaluation System (SES) was updated following the amendment of the Format of the periodic review of SPAMIs by COP23. Video tutorials were produced to facilitate the use of the SES. Ordinary periodic and extraordinary reviews of 25 SPAMIs due in 2024-2025 biennium were conducted and presented for consideration by the 17th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points.

Thanks to the financial support of the Ministry of Environment of Italy (MASE), the fourth edition of SPAMI Twinning Programme (2024-2025) was launched, involving exchanges with Italian SPAMIs, training, and the design of collaborative action plans. Two civil society organisations (CSO) projects were implemented to support SPAMI governance. The four SPAMI Twinning programmes are under evaluation in order to assess their effectiveness and provide recommendations for future improvements.

6. Improvement of capacity on national organizations and experts; Meetings and workshops

SPA/RAC and the ACCOBAMS secretariat provided joint support for the 36th European Cetacean Society Conference, held in May 2025.

SPA/RAC participated to the workshop on ingested marine litter monitoring and entanglement evidence in the ACCOBAMS area convened on the 6 & 7 April 2024 in Catania, Italy and presented the ongoing activities within the framework of the EU funded projects Med Marine Litter II.

SPA/RAC supported the organization of the Sixth Conference on Cetacean Conservation in South Mediterranean Countries, (CSMC6) held in Monastir, Tunisia, 13-15 November 2023.

Within the framework of the 2024 Fishforum “Forum on Fisheries sciences in the Mediterranean and the black sea held in Antalya” Türkiye (19-23 February 2023), the following Med bycatch/Depredation project partners; ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN, MEDASSET, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, WWF, TUDAV , have organized a workshop “Mitigating multi-taxa fisheries interactions in the Mediterranean: a collaborative approach to monitor and reduce vulnerable species bycatch and dolphin depredation”. The workshop aimed to showcase achievements and insights from both projects, highlighting the MedBycatch Project's engagement of over one million people and the Depredation Project's expansion to multiple Mediterranean countries; and to present lessons learned and best practices drawn from impactful data on vulnerable species bycatch and cetacean–fisheries interactions.

SPA/RAC and ACCOBAMS gave a talk “Mitigating dolphin depredation in Mediterranean fisheries: results and insights from collaborative efforts for cetacean conservation and sustainable fisheries" during the Side event “Management, practices, and technology for sustainable fisheries and mariculture » held on 3 June 2025 during “one-ocean-science-2025,

SPA/RAC has participated to the side event The ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative II: A Crucial Collaborative Effort to Preserve Cetaceans in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, dedicated to the official launch of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative II (ASI-II), organized on the occasion of the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3).

7. Cetaceans monitoring

SPA/RAC is supporting the telemetry fieldwork to understand the complex ecology of fin whales in the Mediterranean Sea and North-East North Atlantic waters; The tagging effort will be coordinated by Tethys Research Institute, in collaboration with researchers from the Universitat Politècnica de València.