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Summary of the 24th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and Its Protocols: 2-5 December 2025

The Mediterranean Sea, one of the world’s biodiversity and climate hotspots, is warming 20% faster than the global average, with more than 200,000 tons of plastic waste being dumped into it annually. With a focus on promoting a sustainable blue economy to address these persistent and emerging challenges, the 24th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 24) to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols (Barcelona Convention) gathered in Egypt’s historic capital, Cairo.

Celebrating 50 years of the UN Environment Programme – Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) and 30 years of the Post-Rio Barcelona Convention, COP 24 convened under the theme “Mediterranean Blue Growth: Towards a Resilient and Sustainable Future.” The meeting took place: just after the 2025 [UN Climate Change Conference](#) in Belém, Brazil; during the final stages of negotiations on a new [international treaty to address plastic pollution](#); and “[in stormy political waters](#),” in the words of UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell. Against this backdrop, the Barcelona Convention serves as an example of how to translate global environment and sustainability commitments into regional legal instruments and action.

The highlight of the meeting was the adoption of the Cairo Ministerial Declaration, in which Contracting Parties commit, for instance, to: accelerating climate action; working towards expanding marine protection to 30% of the total area by 2030; reducing pollution including the elimination of harmful single-use plastics by 2030; transitioning to a sustainable low-carbon blue economy and shipping sector; and strengthening inclusive local and regional cooperation and financing.

Other COP 24 highlights included:

- a Ministerial Session under the theme “Sustainable Blue Economy for a Resilient and Healthy Mediterranean”;
- adoption of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2026-2035, a Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas 2026-2035, and the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Policy and Roadmap 2026-2035;
- the announcement of Almería, Spain, as the winner of the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award 2024-2025; and
- signature of Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) between UNEP and the Centre for Environment and Development for



Delegates during the opening of COP 24

the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), as well as between UNEP and MedCities, a regional network of 57 cities and metropolitan areas from 15 Mediterranean countries that works to promote urban sustainable development.

COP 24 also reviewed progress achieved during the 2024-2025 biennium, considered strategic documents, and adopted

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14 decisions, including on the Programme of Work (PoW) and Budget for the 2026-2027 biennium.

COP 24 was organized by UNEP/MAP and took place from 2-5 December 2025 in Cairo, Egypt, with a Ministerial Session on 4 December. Some 600 participants attended the four-day meeting, representing Contracting Parties, UN agencies, research organizations, the private sector, youth groups, and civil society.

Many side events took place on the sidelines of the COP, including on blue economy, climate change, pollution, and biodiversity. The 50-year anniversary of UNEP/MAP and the Barcelona Convention was also celebrated.

A Brief History of the Barcelona Convention

UNEP launched its [Regional Seas Programme](#) in 1974 with the aim of protecting the marine environment using a “shared seas” approach to address the accelerating degradation of the world’s Ocean and coastal areas. More than 143 countries have joined 18 Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans for the sustainable management and use of the marine and coastal environment. Although individual Conventions and Action Plans reflect a similar approach, each is tailored by its governments and institutions to suit the unique environmental challenges faced in each region.

Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP): The [MAP](#) was the first regional seas initiative. Spearheaded under the auspices of UNEP, it was approved in 1975 by Mediterranean states and the European Commission as the institutional framework for addressing marine environmental degradation in the region. It also endorsed the preparation of a framework convention for protecting the marine environment against pollution, as well as two related protocols that would provide a legal basis for action.

Initial MAP objectives included helping Mediterranean governments assess and control pollution, as well as formulate their national marine environmental policies. Over time, the MAP’s focus gradually widened from a sectoral approach to pollution control to integrated coastal zone planning and management for solutions that protect the marine environment.

MAP Phase II: The Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Sustainable Development of the Coastal Areas of the Mediterranean ([MAP Phase II](#)) was adopted in 1995 to address weaknesses in the first action plan and evolving circumstances, specifically with respect to environmental protection and sustainable development following the [1992 Rio UN Conference on Environment and Development \(UNCED\)](#). Its objectives included: ensuring the sustainable management of natural marine and land resources and integrating the environment into socio-economic development and land-use policies; protecting the marine environment and coastal zones through preventing and reducing pollution; protecting nature and enhancing sites and landscapes of ecological or cultural value; strengthening solidarity among Mediterranean states; and contributing to improving the quality of life of those living in the region.

The Barcelona Convention: The Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution ([Barcelona Convention](#)) was adopted in 1976 within the framework of the MAP, as its principal legally binding agreement, and entered into

force in 1978. The first meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention (COP 1) took place in Geneva, Switzerland, from 5-10 February 1979.

The Convention was subsequently amended in 1995 and renamed the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean. These changes were primarily made to include coasts in the Convention’s scope and incorporate concepts that dominated UNCED, such as the protection and preservation of biodiversity, and the application of the precautionary and polluter pays principles. These amendments entered into force in 2004.

The [Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development \(MCSD\)](#) was established in 1996, composed of Contracting Parties and stakeholders on an equal footing, in line with Article 4 of the Barcelona Convention. It is an advisory body to the Contracting Parties to assist in their efforts to integrate environmental issues in their socioeconomic programmes and to promote sustainable development policies in the Mediterranean region and its countries.

In 2008, the MAP-Barcelona Convention system committed to the ecosystem approach as an overarching principle and established its [Compliance Procedures and Mechanism](#). In 2016, Contracting Parties adopted the first six-year Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2016-2021 and the MSSD 2016-2025, providing a strategic policy framework for securing a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Barcelona Convention currently has 22 Contracting Parties: the 21 Mediterranean countries and the European Union (EU). The Convention’s specific objectives include: assessing and controlling marine pollution; ensuring the sustainable management of natural marine and coastal resources; and protecting natural and cultural heritage. The Contracting Parties meet every two years to decide on the MAP PoW and budget, policies, and plans.

[Seven protocols have been adopted](#) under the Convention:

- Protocol for the Prevention and Elimination of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft or Incineration at Sea (Dumping Protocol), which was adopted in 1976 and entered into force in 1978;
- Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in Cases of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea (Prevention and Emergency Protocol), which was adopted in 1976 and entered into force in 1978;
- Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol), which was adopted in 1980 and entered into force in 1983;
- Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity (SPA/BD) in the Mediterranean, which was adopted in 1982 and entered into force in 1986;
- Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution Resulting from the Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf and the Seabed and Its Subsoil (Offshore Protocol), which was adopted in 1994 and entered into force in 2011;



Alberto Pacheco Capella, Chief of UNEP's Regional Seas Branch

- Protocol on the Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (Hazardous Wastes Protocol), which was adopted in 1996 and entered into force in 2008; and
- Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean (ICZM Protocol), which was adopted in 2008 and entered into force in 2011.

COP 22: [COP 22](#) took place from 7-10 December 2021 in Antalya, Türkiye, and marked 45 years of regional solidarity and mutual efforts for environmental sustainability. COP 22 highlights included agreement to submit a joint and coordinated proposal to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for the designation of the Mediterranean Sea as an emission control area for sulphur oxides (Med SOx ECA), as established under Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). COP 22 also adopted the PoW and budget for 2022-2023, the UNEP/MAP MTS for 2022-2027, and the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO). The Ministerial Session culminated in the adoption of the [Antalya Ministerial Declaration](#), showcasing strong political will for joint sustainability efforts in the region.

COP 23: [COP 23](#) was held from 5-8 December 2023 in Portorož, Slovenia. Six main issues constituted the backbone of the agenda: consolidating the evidence base for the pursuit of Good Environmental Status in the Mediterranean; implementing the Post-2020 SAPBIO; addressing the sources of land-based pollution; ingraining sustainability into the blue economy; paving the way for UNEP/MAP activities during the 2024-2025 biennium; and enhancing governance, implementation, enforcement, communication, and advocacy. The meeting culminated in the adoption of the [Portorož Ministerial Declaration](#), in which Contracting Parties commit to, among others: halt the degradation of marine and coastal biodiversity through the implementation of the Mediterranean region's own [post-2020 Biodiversity Framework](#); advance decarbonization; address plastic pollution; make every effort to ensure that by 2030 at least 30% of coastal and marine areas are effectively conserved and managed; and involve youth in environmental decision making.

COP 24 Preparatory Process: UNEP/MAP Focal Points [met from 16-19 September 2025](#) in Athens, Greece. Meetings of the MAP Focal Points, which take place prior to COPs and act as their Preparatory Committee, constitute important milestones in the intergovernmental process. Discussions in Athens focused on the five key themes that constitute the basis of the COP 24 agenda, including the 50-year anniversary of UNEP/MAP and the Barcelona Convention.

Barcelona Convention COP 24 Report

Opening

On Tuesday morning, Egyptian journalist Dalia Abdel Salam welcomed delegates to Cairo, commending regional cooperation between countries and partners to promote a brighter future for the region.

Delegates viewed a video illustrating Egypt's commitment to the conservation and sustainable management of the Mediterranean, including its efforts to protect and clean up its coastline and preserve biodiversity through nature reserves, monitoring, and conservation.

Mitja Bricelj, COP 23 President, Slovenia, highlighted the rich 50-year heritage of the [MAP](#) and the [Convention](#), which brings together countries from three continents. Bricelj highlighted the new MSSD, to be adopted at COP 24, noting it is based on the best available knowledge and incorporates an ecosystem approach.

Alberto Pacheco Capella, Chief of UNEP's [Regional Seas Branch](#), on behalf of UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen, acknowledged the importance of 2025 for global environmental commitments. He described how the Barcelona Convention, the first regional seas convention, has helped shape global ocean governance and link global ambition with regional and national action.

Tatjana Hema, Coordinator, UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention, commended host country Egypt for its hard work in protecting the Mediterranean and for its new Grand Egyptian Museum located by the Giza Pyramids. She drew attention to the triple planetary crisis of pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change, and its impacts on the Mediterranean region. Highlighting the legacy of five decades of work, Hema stressed COP 24 would chart a pathway for the Mediterranean based on



Tatjana Hema, Coordinator, UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention



Manal Awad Mikhail, Egypt's Minister of Local Development and Acting Minister of Environment

collaboration and solidarity for a sustainable, thriving, inclusive, blue economy.

Manal Awad Mikhail, Egypt's Minister of Local Development and Acting Minister of Environment, underscored Egypt's central role within the Mediterranean region as well as the importance of the Mediterranean ecosystem for Egypt's communities and economy. Outlining national efforts, including [Egypt's Blue Economy Roadmap](#), Mikhail stated the need for investment in blue and green economies to effectively manage marine natural resources whilst promoting sustainable development.

Organizational Matters

On Tuesday, UNEP/MAP Coordinator Hema thanked outgoing COP President Bricelj while welcoming incoming COP President Ali Abo Sena, Head of Egypt's Environmental Affairs Agency. Delegates adopted the agenda and rules of procedure (UNEP/MED IG.27/1 and 27/2). As of Friday, 19 credentials had been received and the 2/3 quorum had been met.

Election of Officers: Delegates adopted the proposed Bureau composition until 2027, with: Egypt as President; Croatia, Cyprus, Italy, and Monaco as Vice-Presidents; Morocco as Rapporteur; and Slovenia as *ex officio* member.

Thematic Decisions

Compliance and Reporting: On Tuesday, Aysin Turpanci, Chair of the [Compliance Committee](#), presented on activities of the Committee for the 2024-2025 biennium (UNEP/MED IG.27/4). She highlighted the development of a compliance action plan and reporting template. Noting the overall low submission rates of national reports, she underlined the importance of strengthening compliance and reporting. Delegates discussed a proposal to enable countries that are behind schedule to submit a combined report for multiple biennia. The EU also suggested the addition of text allowing for hybrid meetings. The Secretariat stated reservations regarding the feasibility of organizing virtual interpretation.

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision reflecting the option for hybrid meetings, combined reports, and including Compliance Committee member details.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the revised Rules of Procedure of the Compliance Committee, set out in Annex I to this decision;
- adopts the Activity Report of the Compliance Committee for 2024-2025, set out in Annex II to this decision;
- adopts the PoW of the Compliance Committee for 2026-2027, set out in Annex III to this decision;
- urges Parties that have not yet submitted their national implementation reports for past biennia to do so as soon as possible, if needed in combined reports;
- invites Parties to promptly submit their national implementation reports for the biennium 2024-2025 using the online Barcelona Convention Reporting System by December 2026; and
- elects the candidates listed in Annex V as members and alternate members of the Compliance Committee.

Governance: On Tuesday, the Secretariat outlined the proposed amendments to a draft decision on governance (UNEP/MED IG.27/5), which includes new Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), updating the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) Constitutive Documents, renewing MCSD non-contracting Party membership and adding new MAP partners. For the Non-Contracting Party Parliamentary Group, exceptionally, an extended mandate was proposed due to the importance of their representation and limited existing actors within this group. Women and Youth were added as a new group. The EU welcomed a reference to regional cooperation, but proposed text that would strengthen specific focus on applying an ecosystem approach. The EU also suggested adding text pertaining to the [Plan of Action for a Model Mediterranean Sea](#) (PAMEX), on possible alternative financial tools and options that could support implementation of PAMEX's deliverables. Both additions were accepted.

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision, with minor editorial amendments from the EU.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/2), the COP, *inter alia*:

- approves the MoU between UNEP/MAP and CEDARE, set out in Annex I to this decision, and the MoU between UNEP/MAP and MEDCITIES, set out in Annex II to this decision;
- decides to expand the Non-Contracting Party Members of the MCSD to include regional and sub-regional women and youth organizations;



Aysin Turpanci, Chair of the Compliance Committee

- adopts the updated MCSD constitutive documents, set out in Annex III to this decision;
- adopts the renewed non-Contracting Party Membership of the MCSD, set out in Annex IV to this decision;
- endorses the list of new MAP Partners, set out in Annex V to this decision; and
- invites the PAMEx Technical Secretariat to explore and present, at the next Steering Committee, possible alternative financial tools and options that could support implementation of PAMEx's deliverables.

Reporting Format for Implementation of Articles 6, 7, 11, and 15 of the LBS Protocol: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced this agenda item (UNEP/MED IG.27/6), recalling legally binding obligations for the Contracting Parties regarding reporting.

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision without amendment.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/3), the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts Parts III and IV of the reporting format for implementation of the LBS Protocol, as set out in Annexes I and II to this decision;
- requests the Secretariat (MEDPOL and INFO/RAC) to ensure the reporting format is made available and accessible on the online Barcelona Convention Reporting System in a timely manner; and
- requests the Secretariat (MED POL and INFO/RAC) to continue providing support to Parties, subject to the availability of resources, to facilitate the timely submission of their reports.

Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2026-2035: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced this issue (UNEP/MED IG.27/7). Mohammed Maktit, MCSD President, described the process leading to the new MSSD 2026-2035 as a continuation of the [MSSD](#) 2016-2025. He drew attention to the 31 guidelines underpinning the strategy that will put the region on a sustainable path of strengthened resilience.

Drawing attention to the MSSD's Target 8, as outlined in the draft decision (By 2030, Contracting Parties shall ensure effective implementation of the legally binding measures adopted under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols on wastewater, marine litter, plastic pollution, and under MARPOL), EGYPT expressed concerns pertaining to the varying levels of implementation of MARPOL. The Secretariat clarified that Target 8 was inspirational rather than binding. The EU shared editorial comments to reflect the adoption of the Pact for the Mediterranean in October 2025. The GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN (GFCM) clarified text pertaining to its official name and work.

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision reflecting these discussions.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/4), the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the updated MSSD for 2026-2035 and its flagship initiatives, set out in the Annex to this decision, including its Targets and Strategic Directions;



Tidiani Couma, Monaco

- invites Parties to engage in upscaling and implementing these flagship initiatives; and
- encourages Parties and regional stakeholders to integrate as appropriate the MSSD 2026-2035 objectives, strategic directions, and actions into their policies, strategies, and plans for sustainable development, including through whole of society and whole of government processes.

Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework (RCCAF) for 2026-2035: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced this issue (UNEP/MED IG.27/8). She said updates include a focus on renewable energy, acknowledgement of the work of other organizations in the region, an emphasis on collaboration to maximize synergies, and inclusion of a monitoring framework for strategy implementation. She noted Parties' willingness to ensure synergies with initiatives related to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The EU requested minor edits to footnotes and language regarding sources of climate finance. EGYPT requested the addition of text in the preamble on linking finance, technology, and capacity building. The Secretariat said the issue will be further discussed to ensure coherence with the draft Ministerial Declaration.

On Wednesday, delegates agreed to add text recognizing the need for enhanced resilience and adaptive capacity, including through scaled-up, accessible finance, technology transfer,



Paula Alexandra Duarte Gaspar, EU

and capacity building. On enforcing a zero-tolerance approach towards marine litter, and reference to the possible adoption of a legally-binding instrument on plastic pollution, COP President Abo Sena presented compromise text that did not include the earlier-proposed references to “the entire lifecycle of plastic,” “plastic products,” and “circular economy.”

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision with these amendments.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/5), the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the RCCAF 2026-2035 set out in the Annex I to this decision;
- urges Parties to take into account and address implementation of the RCCAF, in line with their national circumstances and priorities;
- adopts the Performance Monitoring Matrix (MEL) of the RCCAF, set out in Annex II to this decision;
- encourages all relevant organizations to support implementation of the RCCAF, including through adequate funding; and
- requests the Secretariat, the Regional Activity Centre on Climate Change (CC/RAC), and other [MAP Components](#) to make every effort to provide coordinated technical support to identify and mobilize external resources.

Upgraded EcAp Policy, Roadmap, and Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme for the

Mediterranean Sea and Coast (IMAP): On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/MED IG.27/9). Delegates debated whether to refer to a “comprehensive approach of circular economy” rather than “the entire lifecycle of plastics/plastic products.” The Secretariat reaffirmed the Convention’s zero-tolerance approach towards marine litter.

OCEANCARE drew attention to the issue of ocean noise pollution, citing its significant negative impact on ocean life, notably cetaceans, and intense work by the EU and its member states on this issue. He recalled the firm call for an initiative on this matter expressed by Parties at the [third UN Ocean Conference](#) (UNOC).

The NETWORK OF MARINE PROTECTED AREA MANAGERS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN (MEDPAN) suggested several textual additions, including on strengthening



Abdel Shafei Mohamed Osman, Egypt

the resilience of coastal ecosystems and on sea grasses as indicators of ecosystem health, and adding the word “effective” in the context of biodiversity protection.

The AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS OF THE BLACK SEA, MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND CONTIGUOUS ATLANTIC AREA (ACCOBAMS) encouraged implementation of ambitious National Action Plans (NAPs), commended actions undertaken on noise pollution, and reaffirmed its commitment to working together with the Barcelona Convention to address this issue.

The Secretariat recalled that the current draft text was the result of extensive work by the Convention’s scientific bodies, and any textual changes would have to be reviewed by those bodies and revisited at a later stage.

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision, with minor modifications to the text in the annexes, and with Egypt withdrawing its reservation on energy indicators for underwater noise.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/6), the COP, *inter alia*:

- approves the Ecological Vision for the Mediterranean Sea and Coast set out in the decision text;
- agrees to apply the EcAp Strategic Goals for the Mediterranean (2026-2035) set out in the text;
- adopts the MAP EcAp Policy and Roadmap 2026-2035, presented in Annex I to this decision; and
- requests Parties to ensure full implementation of EcAp.

Amendments to Annexes II and III of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological

Diversity (SPA/BD Protocol): On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced the document on amendments to the “Common Criteria for proposing amendments to Annexes II and III of the SPA/BD Protocol” and proposed amendments (UNEP/MED IG.27/10). On Friday, the EU queried whether the footnotes pertaining to reservations by Tunisia (regarding the Sandbar shark *Carcharhinus plumbeus*, dogfish sharks *Centrophorus* spp., and the Blue shark *Prionace glauca*) and Libya (regarding sharks and rays) could be deleted. The Secretariat clarified that no formal request had been received and Libya was not present at the COP.



Nicolas Entrup, OceanCare



Atila Uras, Senior Programme Officer (Scientific and Technical), UNEP/MAP–Barcelona Convention

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision without amendment.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/7), the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the amendments to the “Common Criteria for proposing amendments to Annexes II and III of the SPA/BD Protocol,” set out in Annex I to the decision;
- adopts the amendments to Annexes II and III to the SPA/BD Protocol, set out in Annex II to the decision;
- urges Parties to take, at the national level, the necessary measures for the effective implementation of conservation of the species included in the Annexes II and III to the SPA/BD Protocol; and
- requests the Secretariat (SPA/RAC) to assist Parties, based on the available budget, in the implementation of the necessary conservation and management measures of these species, including through resource mobilization activities.

Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs), Strategies and Action Plans under the SPA/BD Protocol, including the Post-2020 SAPBIO: On Wednesday, introducing this issue (UNEP/MED IG.27/11), the Secretariat drew attention to: accelerating efforts to attain the “[30 x 30 target](#)” to designate 30% of Earth’s land and ocean area as protected areas by 2030, which is a target under the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (GBF); synergies between monitoring frameworks under the GBF and the SAPBIO; the review process for SPAMIs; updating conservation action plans such as for marine turtles and monk seals; and approaches for endangered species.

ISRAEL gave an update on its ratification of the SPA/BD Protocol. MAREVIVO provided an overview of its work and underscored the importance of species inventories.

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision without amendment.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/8), the COP, *inter alia*:

- takes note of the main findings of the mid-term assessment of the Post-2020 SAPBIO start-up activities (UNEP/MED IG.27/Inf.20);

- urges the Secretariat (SPA/RAC) to provide support for the implementation of the Post-2020 SAPBIO;
- requests the Secretariat (SPA/RAC) to work with the relevant designated national authorities in France, Italy, Morocco, and Spain to carry out ordinary reviews for the ten SPAMIs listed in the decision;
- adopts the updated Action Plans and Regional Strategy for the species listed in the decision; and
- requests the Secretariat (SPA/RAC) to update the two Action Plans for the conservation of marine vegetation and cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea.

Mandate of the Regional Activity Centre on Climate

Change: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced the issue (UNEP/MED IG.27/12), emphasizing maximization of synergies of the new CC/RAC with other MAP RACs, local planning, and the MAP Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework.

Delegates applauded the establishment of the CC/RAC. As its host, TÜRKIYE highlighted its contributions and commitment to strengthening climate resilience. ISRAEL expressed reservations about the budget and CC/RAC creation process, but eventually agreed to lift its reservation. Delegates suggested more emphasis on climate change mitigation including through decarbonization and recognizing the role of wetlands and forests, and close collaboration with civil society. The Secretariat highlighted the upcoming preparation of a new MTS as an opportunity for further integration of some of these interest areas.

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision, with minor amendments that reflected the discussions.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/9), the COP, *inter alia*: adopts the mandate of the CC/RAC, set out in Annex I to this decision; and approves the Terms of Reference (ToR) for its Focal Points, set out in Annex II.

Assessment Studies: Summary for Policymakers of the MedECC Special Report on Interlinking Climate Change with the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus in the Mediterranean Basin (MedECC WEF E Nexus Special Report): On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced this issue (UNEP/MED IG.27/13). She noted the draft decision had been approved by the MAP Focal Points at their recent pre-COP meeting in Athens, Greece, and drew attention to the Summary for Policymakers.



Vildan Bölükbaşı Atay, Türkiye



Michael Scoullios, WES-BCA

WATER AND ENVIRONMENT SUPPORT – BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE ACTION (WES-BCA), in commending the decision, stressed that there is no way to address food security, climate crisis and biodiversity loss without a fully integrated approach. He highlighted the Mediterranean as the groundbreaking global region to introduce the WEFE Nexus. GFCM backed actions linking climate change impacts on fisheries and aquaculture. MEDPAN suggested analyzing impacts on small-scale fisheries.

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision without amendment.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/10), the COP, *inter alia*: endorses the Summary for Policymakers of the MedECC WEFE Nexus Special Report as set out in the Annex to the decision; invites Parties to make all possible efforts to overcome the knowledge gaps that are identified in the Report; and encourages Parties, the Secretariat, and all relevant partners to properly disseminate, raise awareness of, and streamline the findings of the Report.

Marine Pollution from Ships: On Wednesday, the Secretariat outlined the revised ToR for the Mediterranean Network of Law Enforcement Officials relating to MARPOL in the Mediterranean Sea (MENELAS) and the Roadmap for Transitioning to Low Carbon Shipping in the Mediterranean (UNEP/MED IG.27/14). The Roadmap includes a step-by-step framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from ships, priority actions, clear timeframes, and policy mechanism recommendations. The Secretariat highlighted changes made to strengthen the governance structure.

Delegates discussed the IMO's delayed decision on adopting a Zero-Net Framework for greenhouse gas emission reductions. EGYPT and the EU addressed suggested amendments, which were deferred for further consideration.

On Friday, in discussing text on marine transport in the decision, the EU suggested replacing "low carbon transition" with "decarbonization" of such transport. EGYPT voiced preference for the initial wording, with the EU agreeing to its retention but specifying that it refers to the "maritime sector."

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision with the EU's edit.



Mona Elbahtimy, Egypt

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/11), the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the revised ToR of MENELAS, set out in Annex I to the decision;
- mandates the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC), as the Secretariat of MENELAS, to facilitate the implementation of the revised ToR;
- encourages all Parties to actively participate in MENELAS and to designate appropriate national focal points and law enforcement officials; and
- invites Parties to provide financial and in-kind support for the effective functioning of MENELAS.

Updated Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan 2026-2035 within the Framework of the Offshore Protocol: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced this issue (UNEP/MED IG.27/15). ISRAEL recalled that the Convention lacks the human resources needed to implement the [Offshore Protocol](#) and called for the appointment of a programme officer for this task at REMPEC. The EU advocated that core funding be allocated to this issue.

The IMO, as administrator of REMPEC, recalled that COP 19 in 2019 had decided against appointing a programme officer and consultants had been engaged since that time. She supported a permanent post on offshore action at REMPEC. The INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF OIL AND GAS PRODUCERS (IOGP) backed in-kind funding for capacity building and offered its continued support towards the Offshore Protocol and its objectives. EGYPT invited technical and financial assistance for Mediterranean developing countries, including through the [Mediterranean Trust Fund](#).

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/12), the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the Updated Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan 2026-2035, set out in the Annex to this decision;
- urges Parties to take the necessary measures to implement the Action Plan in a timely manner, ratify the Offshore Protocol, and adopt legislation for its implementation; and

- invites Parties, the Secretariat, and MAP partners to provide the necessary data to ensure progress towards achievement of the Action Plan can be adequately monitored, assessed, and reported on.

Implementation of Updated NAPs, Containing Measures and Timetables for Their Implementation: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced this issue (UNEP/MED IG.27/16). ISRAEL expressed support for the draft decision.

On Friday, delegates adopted the draft decision without amendment.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/13), the COP, *inter alia*:

- endorses the 2026-2035 NAPs and Programmes of Measures (PoMs) as operational policy instruments essential for effective implementation of the LBS Protocol and achievement of Good Environmental Status of the Mediterranean;
- urges Parties to implement the NAPs/PoMs; and
- invites Parties to provide, on a voluntary basis, the necessary financial and institutional support for the effective implementation of the NAPs/PoMs.

Programme of Work and Budget 2026-2027

On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced the draft PoW and Budget 2026-2027 (UNEP/MED IG.27/17). She described the UNEP/MAP [MTS for 2022-2027](#), with its four thematic programmes on: pollution and litter; healthy ecosystems and enhanced biodiversity; climate resilience; and the sustainable use of resources including circular and blue economy. She outlined the key principles of the PoW, including: full alignment with and effective delivery of the MTS 2022-2027; consideration of regional and global commitments and progress in the region; and balanced activities and funding across the MTS thematic priorities. She noted an optimal level of external resources based on needs and capacity to deliver effectively, with the potential increase of assessed contributions in the future.

The Secretariat described upcoming major milestones, including celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Priority Actions Programme RAC (PAP/RAC) in 2027, Mediterranean Coast Day, and SPAMI Day.

Providing a budget overview for 2026-2027, the Secretariat described the grand total funding for 2026-2027 at EUR 37,602,297 (from EUR 45,493,116 for 2024-2025). She highlighted the balance between administrative and activity costs. For 2025-2026, EUR 15,789,744 are divided as follows: posts and other administrative costs sit at 67%, activities costs at 23%, and programme support costs at 10%. She commended the 98.45% level of collection of assessed and voluntary contributions for 2025 and noted the importance of timely payment of contribution to maximize effective PoW implementation.

COP President Abo Sena established a contact group, chaired by Morocco, to further discuss the draft PoW. On Wednesday, following extended contact group discussions,



Ali Abo Sena, COP 24 President

Morocco presented the main outcomes including: no increased contributions for 2026-2027, but rather a results-based approach for the PoW and Budget for 2028-2029; the ability to transfer savings on an exceptional basis; and the need for enhanced presentation of the PoW and Budget for the next COP to better facilitate decision making.

TUNISIA expressed their commitment as demonstrated through their budgetary contributions to their hosted RAC. TUNISIA and SPAIN indicated they would send updated contribution figures.

On Friday, agreeing to the updates made and to minor editorial comments by the EU, delegates adopted the decision.

Decision: In its decision (UNEP/MAP IG.27/14), the COP, *inter alia*:

- approves the 2026-2027 PoW and Budget set out in the Annex to this decision;
- approves the budget appropriations, as set out in Table 1 (Annex I);
- approves the 2026-2027 assessed ordinary contributions from Parties shown in Table 2 (Annex I); and
- requests the UNEP Executive Director, subject to the approval of the UN Environment Assembly, to extend the Mediterranean Trust Fund through 31 December 2027.



Ministerial Session

Opening: Egyptian journalist Dalia Abdel Salam welcomed delegates to the Ministerial Session on Thursday, where they watched a short video on “the sea that unites us all.”

Manal Awad Mikhail, Acting Minister of Environment and Minister of Local Development, Egypt, emphasized the shared responsibility to ensure the region develops sustainably for future generations. She highlighted the MAP as one of the most comprehensive frameworks available to guide this work and called for accelerating and supporting its implementation, with the full involvement of youth and women.

Susan Gardner, Director of UNEP’s Ecosystems Division, said the MAP has long led the way in translating global commitments into genuine regional action. She praised the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system as a model whose influence “ripples outward across the world,” shaping how ocean governance should be approached: across borders and through shared responsibility. Among key priorities, she outlined: scaling up protection and restoration; preventing pollution to safeguard livelihoods; and investing in a sustainable blue economy supported by green finance and nature-based solutions.

Ambassador Peter Thomson, UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean, highlighted the momentum generated by the three UNOCs, which have generated “a huge wave of action.” Among other influential developments, he mentioned the entering into force of the UN Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction ([BBNJ Agreement](#)) and World Trade Organization progress on curbing harmful fisheries subsidies. Thomson called for a clean, equitable, electrified world powered by renewables. He encouraged delegates to redouble efforts, think beyond current targets, and uphold the principles of regeneration, reciprocity, respect, and intergenerational justice.

Report on Activities Carried Out in the Framework of UNEP/MAP Since COP 23: The Secretariat presented the report (UNEP/MED IG.27/3 and IG.27/18). Congratulating all Parties involved for their fruitful cooperation in fulfilling their mandate from COP 23, she provided an overview of specific achievements on: pollution, biodiversity, climate resilience, sustainable use,



Susan Gardner, Director of UNEP’s Ecosystems Division

governance, monitoring and advocacy and education. She highlighted progress on: a litter-free Mediterranean; the “30x30 target”; sustainable coastal and marine use through an integrated approach; monitoring, including investment in capacity; and organization of key ceremonies, awards, and initiatives.

Interactive Panel Discussion on Sustainable Blue Economy for a Resilient and Healthy Mediterranean: Defining the mounting pressures faced by the Mediterranean and the opportunities presented by a blue economy, Lorenza Babbini, Information and Communication RAC (INFO/RAC) Director, moderated an interactive panel exploring three themes.

Global and regional policy perspectives: Alberto Pacheco Capella, Chief of UNEP’s Regional Seas Branch, stressed that no economy can be built on a degraded Ocean and the prerequisite of ocean health needs to be integrated into all sectors, including national economic planning systems. He stressed the importance of building a business case for the Ocean using blended finance with the support of private capital. Among several examples, he highlighted the Seychelles, which launched the world’s first sovereign blue bond, raising USD 15 million from international investors.

Torsten Thiele, Founder, Global Ocean Trust, described financial models and tools to help boost investment in the Mediterranean. He called for enhanced stakeholder capacities to embrace new financial mechanisms and drew attention to the [Blue Carbon Handbook](#), which describes blue carbon as a nature-based solution for climate action and sustainable development. He stressed the importance of information and data collection, and ocean accounting and investment.

Patricia Charlebois, Deputy Director, Subdivision for Ocean Policy and Pollution Response, IMO, outlined the IMO’s role in setting fair and equitable global standards for shipping that account for environmental protection and sustainable economic growth. She highlighted the recent establishment of an emission control area for sulphur oxides ([Med SOx ECA](#)). Stressing that competitive advantage and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive, she described the IMO’s three-pillar approach towards decarbonization and a blue economy based on regulatory frameworks, capacity development, and operational tools and guidance.



Ambassador Peter Thomson, UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean

Best practices, lessons learned, and tools: Nasser Kamel, Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UFM), identified environmental integrity as a core value for sustainable growth and said the blue economy has become one of the strongest drivers of Mediterranean cooperation. He highlighted the increase in investments in the blue economy, including through the [Blue Mediterranean Partnership](#), and called for increasing partnerships to ensure “the environmental pillar is robust enough to sustain the Mediterranean.” Among priorities, he named implementing ecosystem-based spatial planning and policies.

Julien Rochette, Ocean Programme Director, Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), presented [The Mediterranean Action Plan at 50: Achievements, Challenges, and Future Directions](#) (UNEP/MED IG.27/Inf.17). He said legal frameworks are already in place and praised the MAP as an effective instrument to support their implementation in the region. He stressed that for a cooperative system to be effective, it must be dynamic and adaptive, and integrate all relevant sectors, including transport and tourism.

Miguel Bernal, Executive Secretary, GFCM, described the importance of fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean region. Referencing the findings of the recent report on the [State of the Mediterranean and Black Seas Fisheries](#), which determined that these sectors are, on average, close to sustainable, Bernal emphasized that effective fisheries management provides revenue, livelihoods, and food security. He underscored: the need to scale up participatory decision making and monitoring; the role aquaculture can play for meeting growing food demands; the importance of marine spatial planning and inclusive policies for effective ecosystem management; and the need for the sector to be both profitable and inclusive, especially for women and youth.

Best practices and lessons learned to promote a sustainable blue economy: Maša Kociper, State Secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister of Slovenia, as outgoing COP President, stressed that women are already driving changes at all levels of society. She drew attention to Slovenian education initiatives focusing on women in blue economy professions, noting they result in best practices that: are valuable beyond the region; can help lower barriers at all levels of society; and should be the rule rather than the exception.

Elham Mahmoud Ali Mohamed, Egypt’s National Committee for Oceanography and Fisheries and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Lead Author on aquatic environmental sciences, shared Egypt’s initiatives to promote a blue economy. She described activities in marine and coastal ecosystems, such as efforts to protect beaches, restore sand dunes, and make marine ecosystems resilient to climate change. She drew attention to, *inter alia*: early warning systems; the unique nature of Egypt’s marine protected areas (MPAs), which cover coral reefs and mangroves; efforts to improve the management of fisheries and aquaculture; monitoring of pollution from fishing fleets using remote sensing; and waste management initiatives.

Faten Khamassi, Senior Advisor on blue economy governance, fisheries, and coastal development, provided a Tunisian perspective. She stressed the importance of an experience-based



Faten Khamassi, Senior Advisor on blue economy governance, fisheries, and coastal development

integrated vision which encompasses resilience and social justice, and involves all stakeholders. She said Tunisia’s strategy rests on the realization that no sustainable progress is possible without coordinated governance, rigorous scientific knowledge, innovation, and the engagement of all actors, including women and youth.

Interventions by Ministers and Heads of Delegation: CYPRUS described the Mediterranean as “the cradle of our civilization,” which is under direct threats to the region’s stability, prosperity, and wellbeing. She supported increased regional cooperation to build resilience. FRANCE recalled the third UNOC held in Nice, which called for: the establishment of a regenerative blue economy; all Parties to join MARPOL; actions against illegal fishing; and combating plastic pollution along its entire lifecycle. The EU hailed 50 years of achievements in the Mediterranean and paid tribute to the collective will to work together. He supported the Cairo Ministerial Declaration as a demonstration of strong partnerships in uncertain geopolitical times.

MONTENEGRO said the Mediterranean is “not only a sea that surrounds us; it is a living system that connects, sustains, and defines us.” Among priorities, he highlighted: financial and



A view of the room during the ministerial session

technical support for small states; regional solutions focused on prevention; and innovation and circularity. ALBANIA outlined efforts to reduce pollution, waste, and plastics, and enhance MPA management, describing the development of a blue economy as vital to the country's work towards EU accession. GREECE announced two new MPAs increasing total protection of its marine territorial waters to 35% and called for enabling technical and financial tools available to all stakeholders.

MALTA, stating the need to combine economic development and environmental protection, noted efforts on improving marine protection, addressing water scarcity, investing in a circular economy, and drawing on experience from REMPEC. MOROCCO noted accomplishments to date, including development of a national strategy for a blue economy to provide a model for a new generation of infrastructure. SLOVENIA recommended the "source-to-sea" approach in jointly managing freshwater and marine resources, noting the importance of marine spatial planning, integrated coastal zone management, and blue and green corridors.

SPAIN stressed the importance of cooperation and multilateralism, noting the Mediterranean, with its 46,000 km of coastline, is "not just a sea but a space for life, culture and opportunities that unites people." TÜRKIYE said the Mediterranean is "not merely a shared geography but a shared destiny," and called for science-based, long-term holistic policies for strong environmental governance. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA embraced the shared values of the Barcelona Convention for a resilient, healthy, and sustainable Mediterranean. CROATIA warned that "the Mediterranean has survived thousands of years of our history but might not survive our century if we do not act together." He called for nature-based solutions and circular approaches that ensure the resilience of coastal communities. He also noted that Croatia has increased its MPA coverage from 9 to 32%.

ITALY described national approaches for a blue economy and announced a contribution of EUR 600,000 for implementation of the 2026-2027 PoW. ISRAEL called for clear procedures in establishing new RACs to avoid impacting the funding of existing centers. LEBANON noted the importance of national programmes to address transboundary challenges, outlining

advances on waste and pollution, integrated coastal management, fisheries, and social and gender participation. MONACO stressed sound multilateral processes and the need for robust data and science to inform collective decision making.

Interventions by Organizations: The PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN highlighted the critical role of parliamentarians in ensuring implementation, but noted funding constraints. ACCOBAMS stressed the importance of activities to curtail waste, promoting the science-policy interface, and adapting policies to guarantee the long-term viability of Mediterranean species. The INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) voiced support for nature-based solutions and for providing scientific expertise and technical assistance to help advance the MSSD. Underscoring the coming decade as "decisive," UFM supported all-stakeholder involvement and described efforts to restore marine and coastal ecosystems, reduce pollution, and advance ecosystem-based planning.

In a combined statement, the ARAB NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (RAED), WES-BCA and MEDITERRANEAN INFORMATION OFFICE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT called for intensified engagement with civil society and youth, including through increased access to financing. The ASSOCIATION OF CONTINUITY OF GENERATIONS underscored that communities must be at the heart of implementation for the prosperity of future generations and called for multi-stakeholder implementation drawing on international best practices and science-informed decisions.

The INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPARATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL LAW (CIDCE) emphasized that measuring and understanding rights allows citizens to appreciate work accomplished and concretize environmental democracy. The PELAGOS AGREEMENT, an agreement between France, Italy and Monaco which gave rise to the Pelagos SPAMI, underlined the sanctuary's importance for marine mammals and their habitat, and stressed that continued support is required.

Youth Contributions: COP President Abo Sena recalled that youth participation gained formal visibility at COP 21 in Naples in 2019, marking the beginning of consistent youth engagement



Selma Čengić, Executive Director, Hydro-Engineering Institute Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Francesco Tomas, General Director of Biodiversity and Sea Protection, Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, Italy



Mohamed Rafat, Co-Coordinator of the MSSD Flagship Initiative on the Mediterranean Youth Group

in the Barcelona Convention process. He invited three youth representatives to address the Ministerial Session.

Mohamed Rafat, Co-Coordinator of the MSSD Flagship Initiative on the Mediterranean Youth Group, delivered messages from the [Mediterranean Stakeholder Forum on Environment and Climate Action](#) held in Cairo from 21-23 October 2025. He stressed that young people are essential partners in environmental decision-making processes, and advocated for involving youth from the start. He called for: a permanent structure for youth engagement, backed by financial support; equitable access to renewable energy technologies; and incentives for youth-led circular economy hubs.

Jannah Kamel, EgYouth4Climate and Youth for Sustainable Development, presented on the Pre-COP 24 [MedSea Youth Forum](#), held in Alexandria, Egypt, on 27 November 2025. She shared a vision of a thriving Mediterranean region that effectively addresses pollution, overfishing, and climate change, backed by regulated and sustainable tourism, and the rigorous implementation and enforcement of regulations. She said many young people today are already working towards this vision, but called for support, an enabling environment, and a permanent seat at the decision-making table.

Anissa Wardi, Co-Coordinator of the MSSD Flagship Initiative on the Mediterranean Youth Group, reported on the [COP 24 side event](#) “Bridging Shores: Elevating Youth Leadership for a Sustainable Mediterranean.” She called on delegates to consider youth as co-architects – not only beneficiaries – of efforts towards a sustainable Mediterranean. Stressing that a blue economy requires a new generation of skilled young people, she called for a Mediterranean youth innovation fund, and institutionalization of youth participation in MCSDD.

Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award Ceremony: The [Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award](#) 2024-2025, the fifth edition of the award, was presented to the City of Almería, Spain. Second place was awarded to Balıkesir, Türkiye, and third place to Antalya, Türkiye.

Funded by the government of Türkiye and established under the MSSD, the award was created as part of the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system to encourage cities to



Antonio Urdiales, Councilor, Environmental and Energy Sustainability, on behalf of the City of Almería, receives the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award.

improve quality of life and promote a healthy environment in the Mediterranean.

Fatma Varank, Deputy Minister of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, Türkiye, affirmed Türkiye’s commitment to the award and underlined the important role of municipalities in “handing over our cities to future generations.” Tatjana Hema, UNEP/MAP Coordinator, identified the award as a successful flagship initiative for sustainable development. She said the interest around the award is growing, as shown by the increasing number of applicants.

Antonio Urdiales, Councilor, Environmental and Energy Sustainability, representing María del Mar Vázquez Agüero, Mayor of Almería, expressed his city’s appreciation for winning the award. Noting all Mediterranean cities share common challenges, he said working together is the best strategy, and outlined the three pillars of Almería’s environmental action: protection of the natural coastal system; planning that integrates natural and urban health and climate change; and promoting a sustainable blue economy that connects all sectors.

UNEP/MAP then presented a video about the award. Previous awards were given to Izmir, Türkiye, in 2017; Ashdod, Israel, in 2019; Málaga, Spain, in 2021; and Genoa, Italy, in 2023. On Friday, delegates watched a video showcasing Almería’s blue governance efforts to drive progress towards a thriving Mediterranean.

Cairo Ministerial Declaration

On Tuesday, COP President Abo Sena introduced the draft Cairo Ministerial Declaration (UNEP/MED IG.27/20). EGYPT presented on its structure and outstanding issues, which an informal working group, chaired by Egypt, further discussed.

On Wednesday, EGYPT announced that the group had reached consensus on the text. She highlighted an emphasis on the need to account for respective national circumstances and capabilities, as well as enhanced support from all sources, including accessible finance, capacity building, technical assistance, and technology transfer. She commended the group’s spirit of compromise and agreement that had led to a strong Declaration reflecting solidarity and cooperation.

The Secretariat outlined the different sections included in the Declaration. Comments from the floor included:

- the PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN, calling for recognizing the role of parliamentarians;
- WWF MEDITERRANEAN, OCEANCARE, MEDPAN, IUCN and CIDCE, supported by MONACO, lamenting the absence of a reference to a comprehensive approach addressing the full lifecycle of plastics; and
- MEDCITIES, drawing attention to the role played by local authorities and the importance of allocating resources to cities for them to act towards achieving the SDGs.

During Thursday's Ministerial Session, the Secretariat read the draft text of the Cairo Ministerial Declaration. The COP then adopted the document without amendment, a moment that was met with a standing ovation.

Final Declaration: In the Cairo Ministerial Declaration (UNEP/MED IG.27/CRP.2), celebrating the 50th anniversary of UNEP/MAP and the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the post-Rio Barcelona Convention, Parties commit, among other things, to:

- accelerate and scale up climate action including through: integration of climate change adaptation into national commitments and plans, and alignment with the RCCAF (2026-2035) and the CC/RAC;
- strengthen and expand Marine and Coastal Protected Areas and Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures with the aim of protecting 30% of the Mediterranean by 2030;
- address marine and land-based pollution and litter, including through regulation and gradual elimination of harmful single-use plastics and chemicals of concern by 2030 and supporting low-carbon transitions, notably in the shipping sector;
- promote blue and circular economies, prioritizing integrated and nature-based solutions for a healthy, well monitored, resilient Mediterranean; and
- emphasize the empowerment of women and youth, and deepening stakeholder engagement with international organizations, the public and private sectors, and civil society.

Date and Place of COP 25

On Friday, CROATIA warmly invited delegates to Croatia for COP 25, to be held in 2027, with the dates and location to be determined. He said hosting COP 25 is both an honor and a responsibility that Croatia embraces with full seriousness and enthusiasm.

Any Other Business

On Friday, Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, Ambassador of France for the Poles and Maritime Issues, spoke on behalf of Emmanuel Macron, President of France. Poivre d'Arvor was pleased to see that the commitments from UNOC in Nice were present at COP 24, drew parallels with the [BBNJ Agreement](#), and urged all Mediterranean countries to ratify it. Noting the Mediterranean is one of the most polluted seas in the world, he described the Ministerial Declaration's text as "cautious" on plastics and urged immediate, comprehensive action. He emphasized the need for strong science-based climate initiatives and holistic biodiversity commitments.



Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, Ambassador of France for the Poles and Maritime Issues

Adoption of the Meeting Report and Closing

In Friday's plenary, COP 24 President Abo Sena presented the meeting report for consideration. The EU provided various clarifications, including on the number of contracting Parties represented – which the Secretariat noted as 19 as Libya had not attended – and several editorial changes. EGYPT and ISRAEL also provided textual comments, the former pertaining to different national circumstances and capabilities, and the latter stressing the need for synergies with Parties in the establishment of RACs. CROATIA proposed adding that it would host COP 25.

Delegates agreed and adopted the meeting report, reflecting these changes.

In appreciation for the successful meeting and hard work of all participants, COP President Abo Sena highlighted that Egypt was happy to have hosted the Barcelona Convention, and was always ready to support peace and coexistence, and promote environmental matters for the health and prosperity of all.

Commending the outstanding spirit of the meeting, Alberto Pacheco Capella, Chief of UNEP's Regional Seas Branch, thanked the Egyptian government for their hospitality and congratulated them on the newly opened Grand Egyptian Museum. He underscored the many challenges ahead that the Parties will have to consider on their road to a sustainable blue



Domagoj Krnjak, Croatia

economy and called for them to implement the Convention's Protocols.

In closing, UNEP/MAP Coordinator Tatjana Hema described the take-home messages from COP 24 as solidarity, consensus, and going in the right direction. She reminded delegates that “the next biennium to COP 25 starts tomorrow!”

COP 24 President Abo Sena closed the meeting at 6:00pm.

Side Events

Side events constituted an important part of COP 24. Over 40 were held throughout the week, organized by various organizations, institutions, and initiatives, including the UNEP/MAP programmes. The side events were grouped by theme, including: circular economy; blue economy; shipping and oil pollution; pollution and coastal restoration; biodiversity; protected areas; and climate change.

One side event, held on Tuesday afternoon, focused on two studies that were funded by the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security (MASE). These studies were carried out in the context of REMPEC, which assists Mediterranean coastal states in implementing and enforcing international maritime conventions related to the prevention, preparedness, and response relating to pollution from ships. The two studies focused on: [prevention of air pollution from ships](#) and the environmental impact of the use of emission control systems on ships; and the possible implementation of [green shipping routes \(corridors\) and maritime hubs \(green hubs\)](#) to reduce emissions from ships.

On Tuesday, OceanCare and BC3 – Basque Centre for Climate Change presented a carbon budget [analysis report](#), which noted that at current emission rates, the Mediterranean's remaining carbon budget will be exhausted by 2035, pushing the region beyond the Paris Agreement's 2°C threshold. The report also states that staying within the 2°C limit remains achievable if Mediterranean countries commit to coordinated regional efforts with annual emission reductions of around 6% on average from 2030.

On Tuesday evening, a reception was held, hosted by the Secretariat, to celebrate 50 years of UNEP/MAP and the Barcelona Convention. The event highlighted past successes, including on marine litter control and establishment of MPAs, but also stressed the continued need to address the triple planetary crisis.

On Wednesday, a side event convened on [MedProgramme](#), a Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded programme executed by UNEP/MAP aimed at enhancing environmental security in the region. UNEP/MAP Coordinator Hema stressed its strong transformative power, invited new partnerships, and expressed optimism regarding an extension of the Programme after 2026.

On Thursday, UNEP/MAP facilitated a side event on three EU-funded projects that are a driving force for IMAP implementation. These complementary projects, implemented in seven countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia), bring added value in their synergies. The [SEMPA Project](#) is aimed at the creation of a connected, effectively managed network of marine and coastal protected areas. [EcAp MED PLUS](#) supports countries in implementing the ecosystem approach and IMAP. [Marine Litter MED PLUS](#) aims to reduce and prevent marine litter by enhancing implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management.

On Thursday evening, a Women Leaders Dinner was hosted by Egypt and co-organized with UNEP/MAP. UNEP/MAP Coordinator Hema recounted how this tradition started at COP 22 in Antalya, Türkiye, to make space for women leaders to meet and share their unique perspectives and experiences, thus strengthening leadership within the region.

Upcoming Meetings

European Ocean Days: European Ocean Days is a week-long event with a series of dynamic and interconnected sessions focused on ocean-related themes, designed to encourage participants to engage across topics and contribute to a shared vision for the prosperity, security, and sustainability of our Ocean. **dates:** 2-6 March 2026 **location:** Brussels, Belgium **www:** maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/theme/governance/european-ocean-days_en

European Maritime Day: At this annual event, Europe's maritime community meets to network, discuss, and outline joint action on maritime affairs and sustainable blue economy, and reflect on the crucial role the seas play in everyday life. **dates:** 21-22 May 2026 **location:** Limassol, Cyprus **www:** maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/theme/governance/european-maritime-day_en

Our Ocean Conference: The 2026 Our Ocean Conference will convene with high-level representatives from governments, non-



Group photo of COP 24 participants

governmental organizations, international groups, academia, and the private sector to accelerate action and commitments for ocean protection. **dates:** 16-18 June 2026 **location:** Mombasa, Kenya **www:** ouroceanconference.org/

Mediterranean Coast Day: Mediterranean Coast Day is an annual celebration of our shared coast and a reminder of our collective responsibility to protect it. Bringing together institutions, experts, communities, and citizens, Coast Day 2026 will meet under the theme “Inspiring Coastal Communities to Take Action for the Sustainable Development of the Mediterranean” to inspire solutions, raise awareness, and promote lasting action for coastal resilience year-round. **dates:** 25 September 2026 **location:** TBC **www:** coastday.net/

UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 17): The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will convene its 17th meeting in Armenia in October 2026. **dates:** 19-30 October 2026 **location:** Yerevan, Armenia **www:** www.cbd.int/meetings/COP-17

7th World Conference on Marine Biodiversity: The 7th edition of the World Conference on Marine Biodiversity will focus on the theme “The marine biodiversity insights we need, for the Ocean we want.” Taking place just over halfway through the UN Ocean Decade, it will provide an opportunity to take stock of ongoing actions and initiatives and evaluate outstanding issues to be tackled by the end of the Decade. **dates:** 17-20 November 2026 **location:** Bruges, Belgium **www:** www.wcmb2026.org/

2027 Ocean Decade Conference: Co-organized by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Government of Brazil, the conference will take stock of global progress, present new initiatives, and generate partnerships to create scalable and lasting impact during the remaining three years of the Decade and discuss the foundation of the post-Decade legacy. **dates:** 7-9 April 2027 **location:** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil **www:** oceandecade.org/events/2027-ocean-decade-conference/

11th World Water Forum: The World Water Forum is the largest international gathering in the water sector and is co-organized by the World Water Council and a host city. The 11th World Water Forum will convene on the theme “Action for a Better Future.” **dates:** 14-15 April 2027 **location:** Riyadh, Saudi Arabia **www:** worldwaterforum.org/

Fourth UN Ocean Conference: The fourth UNOC to Support the Implementation of SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) will be co-hosted by Chile and the Republic of Korea. **dates:** 2028 **location:** Republic of Korea **www:** un.org/sustainabledevelopment/oceans/

Barcelona Convention COP 25: Croatia will host the next meeting of the COP to the Barcelona Convention in 2027, in a location to be determined. **dates:** 2027, TBC **location:** Croatia **www:** www.unep.org/unepmap/who-we-are/barcelona-convention-and-protocols

For additional upcoming events, see: sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

ACCOBAMS	Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area
CC/RAC	Regional Activity Centre on Climate Change
COP	Conference of the Contracting Parties
EcAp	Ecosystem Approach
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
IMAP	Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme
IMO	International Maritime Organization
LBS	Land-based Sources
MAP	Mediterranean Action Plan
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
MCPA	Marine and Coastal Protected Area
MCSO	Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSSD	Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
NAPs	National Action Plans
PAMEx	Plan of Action for a Model Mediterranean Sea
PoM	Programmes of Measures
PoW	Programme of Work
RAC	Regional Activity Centre
REMPEC	Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea
RCCAF	Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework
SAPBIO	Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPA/BD	Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity
SPAMIs	Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance
UFM	Union for the Mediterranean
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNEP/MAP	UN Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan
WEFE	Water – Energy – Food – Ecosystems