



Mediterranean Action Plan  
Barcelona Convention



United Nations  
Environment Programme

## Press Release

### **The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols meet in Naples to review progress and take urgent action to protect beleaguered Mediterranean ecosystems**

- Ministers and senior officials representing 21 Mediterranean States and the European Union will attend COP21, which will see negotiations on a set of decisions pertaining to marine litter, the blue economy, biodiversity and marine protected areas, and climate change.
- Representing only 1% of the world's ocean surface, the Mediterranean hosts up to 18% of the world's known marine species and features one of the highest concentrations of marine litter mostly composed of plastics: more than 100,000 microplastic items/km<sup>2</sup>, and up to 64 million particles/km<sup>2</sup> of floating litter.
- Arrivals of tourists sextupled in the Mediterranean region since 1970, reaching 337 million in 2017.
- The findings of a flagship UNEP/MAP Report on the State of the Environment and Development (SoED) to be released in 2020 identifies key sectors in the region as drivers of environmental degradation.

**Athens, 29 November 2019** – Convened by the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP), the 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP21) will take place on 2-5 December 2019. More than two hundred participants and guests will take part in the four-day negotiations, side-events, exhibitions and panel discussions that will begin on Monday, 2 December, in Castel dell'Ovo, a picturesque sea-side medieval castle that will host the meeting in Naples, Italy.

The Ministerial Segment of COP21 will open on 4 December 2019 with statements from H.E. Mr. Sergio Costa, Minister for Environment, Land and Sea Protection of Italy, and Ms. Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP. Other Dignitaries from Italy and eminent guests representing academia, civil society, the private sector and intergovernmental organizations will also speak during the Ministerial Segment, which will feature a High-Level Panel discussion on "Protecting the marine environment and coastal region of the Mediterranean: game-changing action for sustainability".

Draft decisions prepared by the UNEP/MAP–Barcelona Convention Secretariat and submitted to COP21 for adoption include regional plans to prevent and reduce pollution from Land-Based Sources (LBS), standards and guidelines under the Offshore, LBS and Dumping Protocols of the Barcelona Convention, and an ambitious roadmap for the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea Area as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides, in line with the terms of Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL).

Official delegations will also examine draft decisions related to biodiversity and ecosystems, such as the alignment of the Strategic Action Programme on Biodiversity in the Mediterranean

(SAPBIO) with the forthcoming Post-2020 Biodiversity framework and the designation of four new Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs).

The COP21 agenda notably carries a focus on sustainability with a view for UNEP/MAP to underpin efforts by the Contracting Parties in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Contracting Parties will therefore consider for adoption a Common Regional Framework on Integrated Coastal Zone Management encompassing resilience-bolstering action in the face of climate hazards, as well as a set of regional measures on green and circular businesses and sustainable products.

The UNEP/MAP Coordinator Gaetano Leone said that “COP21 will contribute to the ongoing intergovernmental processes on the ocean, climate change and biodiversity with a focus on the Mediterranean region. Its outcomes will feed into the UNEP marine and coastal Strategy for the 2020–2030 decade, and it will mark an important milestone in the Mediterranean environmental governance process that UNEP/MAP continues to successfully coordinate despite disparities in socio-economic contexts and capacities among the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention”.

“The UNEP/MAP State of Environment and Development Report, which will be examined by COP21, describes mounting pressure on our basin, deriving from population growth, climate change, agriculture and fisheries, tourism, extractive industries, and transport”.

The UNEP MAP Coordinator added that “the June 2020 UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon and the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to be adopted at a landmark United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) conference in October 2020, will be very present in our COP21 deliberations and discussions with the Contracting Parties in Naples”.

The decisions on the COP21 agenda, together with the proposed Programme of Work and Budget of UNEP/MAP for 2020-2021, the launch of preparations for the next UNEP/MAP medium-term strategy (2022-2027) and the Naples Ministerial Declaration, will guide the work of the MAP-Barcelona Convention system during the next biennium (2020-2021) and beyond.

In the lead-up to COP21, UNEP/MAP coordinated a participatory process to ensure that the voice of stakeholders in the Mediterranean be heard in Naples. The process started in the framework of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development – a multi-stakeholder, inclusive advisory body to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention – with an online consultation of experts from the region with a view to capturing their perspectives on the COP21 priority themes.

An additional stakeholder consultation took place on 24-25 October 2019 in Athens, Greece, and saw the participation of representatives of several civil society and intergovernmental organizations working in the Mediterranean region. The interactive discussions with and among participants generated suggestions and proposals pertaining to the preparation of the Naples Ministerial Declaration and the future work of UNEP/MAP.

The Host Country, Italy, organized a gathering of youth on 24 October 2019 in Naples to provide young women and men from across the Mediterranean region with a platform to voice their concerns and proposals for consideration by Mediterranean policymakers at COP21.

Earlier in September, Focal Points of the UNEP/MAP in Mediterranean countries met in Athens to pave the way for the intergovernmental negotiations to be held in Naples next week.

### **Notes To Editors**

- The Provisional timetable of the meeting is accessible through [this link](#).
- Official hashtag to follow COP21 on social media: **#COP21Napoli**
- The Twitter account of UNEP/MAP is @UNEPMAPNews:  
<https://twitter.com/unepmapnews>
- Host Country COP21 website: the website maintained by the Host Country is available at the following address: [www.cop21med-italy.net](http://www.cop21med-italy.net)

### **About the UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan – Barcelona Convention System**

UNEP is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. UNEP works with governments, the private sector, civil society and with other UN entities and international organizations across the world. In 1974, UNEP established its Regional Seas Programme with the scope of coordinating activities aimed at the protection of the marine environment through a regional approach. The Mediterranean Action Plan was the first UNEP initiative to be developed under the Programme and became the model for other seas across the globe.

In 1975, the Mediterranean States and the European Community approved the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) as the institutional framework for cooperation in addressing common challenges of marine environmental degradation. UNEP/MAP endorsed the preparation of a framework convention for the protection of the marine environment against pollution.

The Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution was adopted in 1976 by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the Coastal States of the Mediterranean Region for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea in Barcelona, Spain. It was amended on 10 June 1995 and renamed Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention). Over the years, the Contracting Parties adopted seven implementing Protocols to the Barcelona Convention addressing specific measures, technical requirements, standards and specifications to abate, phase out and eliminate marine pollution from different land and sea-based sources; protect and conserve marine and coastal biodiversity and ecosystems and apply integrated coastal zone management principles and related tools. Taken together, this legal framework provides effective instruments to preserve the extraordinary wealth of resources that the Mediterranean offers to the millions of people inhabiting its shores and to the world.

### **Contact**

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