

MSSD REVIEW – STAKEHOLDER NEWSBRIEF N°3 – MARCH 2016

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Adoption of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025

Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development

At their 19th Ordinary Meeting ([COP19](#)) held in Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016, the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean ([Barcelona Convention](#)) adopted the revised Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD 2016-2025). As contained in the Annex to this Decision, the Strategy is a strategic guiding document for all stakeholders and partners to translate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the regional, sub-regional and national levels.



Following the [decision](#) adopted by Contracting Parties to launch the review process of the MSSD (COP18, Istanbul, Turkey, December 2013), the aims of the Strategy are as follows:

- To provide a strategic policy framework to secure a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region;
- To adapt international commitments to regional conditions, to guide national strategies and to stimulate regional cooperation in the achievement of sustainable development objectives;
- To link the need to protect the environment to socio-economic development.

The Strategy is formulated taking into account the outcomes of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development ([Rio+20](#)) which put particular focus on the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. MSSD 2016-2025 aims to contribute significantly to the long-term sustainable development vision of the Mediterranean region, especially within the context of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 (New York).

The review of the 2005 MSSD was led by the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCS D) with the assistance of the Secretariat to the Barcelona Convention (Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan – UNEP/MAP) through its [Plan Bleu](#) Regional Activity Centre (PB/RAC) and the support of the other MAP components (RACs). The Strategy was developed through a highly inclusive process, in which all member States and regional key stakeholders had the opportunity to participate. The main steps of this participatory process were as follows:

- February 2014: [MSSD Review officially launched](#) in Malta;
- April-May 2014: Online consultation based on a [Consultation Document](#);
- 11-12 June 2014: [MCS D Steering Committee Meeting](#) held in Malta – structure and vision agreed;
- July-November 2014: Thematic Working Groups (+450 participants) – online consultations and [participatory workshops](#) (Marseilles and Sophia-Antipolis, France);
- January 2014: First draft of MSSD 2016-2025 delivered;
- 17-18 February 2015: [Conference on the Review of the MSSD](#) held in Malta – key stakeholders’ comments and feedback, plus written comments received by non-participants;
- 9-11 June 2015: [16th MCS D Meeting](#) held in Morocco – draft revised MSSD endorsed;
- 9-12 February 2016: Adoption of the MSSD 2016-2025 at COP19 held in Greece.

16th Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCS D)

From 9 to 11 June 2015, the Moroccan government kindly hosted the 16th Meeting of the MCS D in Marrakesh. One of main goals of this meeting was the endorsement of the MSSD 2016-2025 following the comments addressed by the participants at the Conference on the Review of the MSSD held in Floriana (Malta) on 17-18 February 2015.



The main result of the successful 16th Meeting of the MCS D was the endorsement of the draft revised MSSD 2016-2025. In their recommendations, the MCS D members and observers welcomed with appreciation the document, endorsed the proposed structure and content, and praised the work done for its preparation. In particular, they commended the process for its inclusiveness and the quality of the document for its novelty, ambition and completeness. The discussions led to some adjustments of the text to be reflected in the final draft document, before it was officially submitted for endorsement at MAP Focal Points Meeting in October 2015 and adoption at the Barcelona Convention COP19 in February 2016.

MSSD 2016-2025 is based on the principle that socio-economic development needs to be harmonized with the environment and protection of natural resources. It emphasizes that investing in the environment is the best way to secure long-term sustainable job creation: an essential process for the achievement of sustainable socio-economic development for the present and future generations.

The Strategy highlights that the Mediterranean region is particularly rich in human settlements and civilizations, both ancient and modern, as well as in natural ecosystems and environmental values. However, the Mediterranean is at the same time subject to considerable pressures, due to urban sprawl of big agglomerations and coastal cities, intense economic uses leading resources and ecosystems to stress conditions, and significant disparities between sub-regions.

Therefore, the MSSD vision answers to the need for a proper development direction: ***A prosperous and peaceful Mediterranean region in which people enjoy a high quality of life and where sustainable development takes place within the carrying capacity of healthy ecosystems.*** This must be achieved through common objectives, strong involvement of all stakeholders, cooperation, solidarity, equity and participatory governance.

A set of guiding principles also informs the Strategy, as follows: the importance of an integrated approach to environmental and development planning; an openness to a plurality of future development models; a balanced approach to territorial development; the precautionary and polluter pays principles; a participatory approach to policy and decision-making; the importance of evidence-based policy; the reconciliation of long- and short-term for planning and evaluation; transparency; and, the partnership between the MAP system and other international and regional organizations.

MSSD 2016-2025 addresses key areas impacted by human activity, from the marine and coastal environments, using ecosystem-based approach and planning tools such as Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), to urban settlements and the rural and agricultural systems. It also focuses on climate change, which is expected to impact severely the Mediterranean. The Strategy also introduces emerging approaches that help in turning political will into reality: e.g. a Green economy approach combined with Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP).

MSSD 2016-2025 follows a structure based on six objectives that lie in the interface between environment and development. They were chosen to provide scope for an integrated approach to address sustainability issues. The first objectives of the Strategy reflect a territorial approach, while the other objectives are crosscutting ones, as follows:

1. **Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas:** the objective focusing on “Sea and coasts” sits firmly and historically in the basin approach taken by the MAP and the Barcelona Convention. The strategy for marine and coastal areas rests on strengthen implementation of and compliance with the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention and other regional policy instruments, and initiatives supplemented by national approaches;
2. **Promoting resource management, food production and food security through sustainable forms of rural development:** the maintenance of the good status and health of rural ecosystems is fundamental for both biodiversity conservation and human well-being. The sustainable use, management and conservation of natural resources, rural development and food production and security are interdependent aspects that ensure the well-being of rural communities and provide significant inputs to downstream industries, from food processing to tourism;

3. **Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities:** a new, sustainable, inclusive and creative approach to planning and managing Mediterranean cities is the best hope for riparian urban settlements. Key elements of this approach are the following: use inclusive urban planning and management processes, promote socio-economic cohesion, reduce environmental pressures, increase resilience, protect and rehabilitate historical areas, and promote green buildings and sustainable waste management within the context of a more circular economy.
4. **Addressing climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean:** The Strategy calls for progress towards a green, low-carbon and climate-resilient Mediterranean region. The Strategy is complemented by the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Coastal and Marine Areas;
5. **Transition towards a green and blue economy:** A green economy – called blue economy when applied to the Mediterranean coastal, marine and maritime sectors – is one that promotes sustainable development whilst improving human well-being and social equity, and reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. The green economy includes the objectives of decent jobs creation for all, particularly youth and women, and social inclusion, in order to eradicate poverty and promote a more healthy and just society. The Strategy is complemented by the Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan for the Mediterranean;
6. **Improving governance in support of sustainable development:** the strategy for improving environmental governance in the Mediterranean rests on five pillars: Enhance international dialogue and cooperation; Promote stakeholder engagement to secure inclusive processes and integrity in decision-making; Promote implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements; Promote education and research; and, Enhance regional capabilities for information management.

A set of strategic directions is formulated for each of the six overall objectives. The strategic directions are complemented by national and regional actions, as well as flagship initiatives and targets. The actions aim at providing guidance and inspiration for the most effective implementation of the Strategy. Not all countries may have the necessity or the resources to undertake all the proposed actions; the proposed actions need to be adapted to national needs.

The Flagship initiatives recommended by the Strategy are as follows:

- Support the Trust Fund for Mediterranean marine protected areas;
- Promote the “Green list” (IUCN World Parks Congress) in riparian states to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of parks managing bodies created;
- Promote the “Istanbul Environment Friendly City” Award approved by COP19;
- Create a sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean, with a view to planning cities that will work for everyone, in order to make them inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;
- Undertake regional assessments, as well as knowledge exchanges, of high- and low-tech solutions, that have been successfully implemented to achieve waste reduction;

- Establish a regional science-policy interface mechanism, including the social and behavioural sciences, endorsed by all the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, with a view to preparing consolidated regional scientific assessments and guidance on climate change trends, impacts and adaptation and mitigation options;
- Create and promote a Mediterranean business award for environmental innovation;
- Integrate sustainability principles into public procurement at national and local levels;
- Encourage the adoption and implementation of the Aarhus Convention on Public Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters;
- Develop capacity building programmes on issues related to implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements, including environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments;
- Establish a publicly-accessible Mediterranean integrated information system through a triumvirate of national governments, international institutions and the private sector to collate and transparently display information on the state of the environment.

Lastly, a strategy depends on its delivery mechanism: MSSD 2016-2025 looks into the means for financing its implementation and measuring its effects, as well as the governance prerequisites. A comprehensive monitoring system is also necessary through the establishment of a dashboard of sustainability indicators populated for the Mediterranean. To this end, Plan Bleu is organizing a first [regional workshop](#) “How to monitor the MSSD 2016-2025 implementation?” (30-31 March 2016, Saint Laurent du Var, France). Gathering Mediterranean decision-makers, stakeholders and experts, this workshop aims at defining a regional process for the monitoring of the MSSD 2016-2025 implementation, in relation with the adaptation of the SDGs to the Mediterranean region.

MSSD 2016-2025 is the result of over two years of intensive collaborative work within the MAP system. Involvement, support, and substantial contributions from many regional and national organizations and stakeholders was crucial to develop this important document. This newsbrief represents a unique occasion to congratulate and thank all of them for their support and effort for making that possible. Although facilitated by the MAP system, it is the participation of all stakeholders that will play a decisive role in the delivery of the Strategy, from national and local governments to civil society, academia, private sector, and the support of regional institutions. It is a collective effort, through which the sum will be much greater than the addition of the parts, thanks to the synergies developed and economies of scale achieved. That is why we rely on you to maintain your valuable commitment for the implementation of your Strategy!

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