

# **“A blue economy for a healthy Mediterranean - Measuring, Monitoring and Promoting an environmentally sustainable economy in the Mediterranean region”**

## **Final Conference**

**Marseille, 29-30-31 May 2017**

## 1 Objectives and expected participants

Three UNEP/MAP Regional Activity Centres (RACs), Plan Bleu, PAP/RAC and SCP/RAC, as main partners, are jointly organising the Final Conference of the project “A blue economy for a healthy Mediterranean - Measuring, Monitoring and Promoting an environmentally sustainable economy in the Mediterranean region”.

This final event aims at opening debate on the critical issues regarding the development of a blue economy in the Mediterranean, in order to propose some recommendations for the future. To this purpose, it will present and discuss the outcomes and conclusions of the project, in order to lay down recommendations to be included in strategic documents of Mediterranean governance processes through multilateral negotiations (e.g. MSSD review working groups, Mediterranean SCP Action plan consultation process, or MCSDD meetings) as a positive contribution for the sustainable development of the region. Synergies with and among similar initiatives and programmes (UfM, UE, UNEP, UNEP/MAP, etc.) will be explicitly highlighted.

Besides representatives of the UNEP/MAP RACs partners to the project, the Final Conference will gather regional stakeholders, some of which are already involved in the project via its Advisory board.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 The Mediterranean basin & Blue Economy

Social, economic and environmental challenges affecting the Mediterranean region call for shared integrated responses, as well as for strong and well-coordinated managerial framework dealing in an integrated manner with both environmental issues and underlying socioeconomic causes.

Many governance structures applying to the region have defined a variety of tools and measures (strategies, action plans, other) to achieving a more sustainable development, allowing the preservation and sustainable use of the Mediterranean marine and coastal capital. Past decades have witnessed a remarkable number of undertakings focusing on a wide spectrum of environmental issues and targeting the shift of the current socio-economic model towards a blue, environmentally sustainable development (UNEP/MAP MSSD, SCP Action Plan, EcAp Initiative, IZCM Protocol, UfM Sustainable development and Blue Economy initiatives, EU MSFD and Circular Economy package, among others).

Despite the will to resolve environmental concerns and shift unsustainable patterns, and due to the complexity and wide scope of the issue, challenges and gaps in implementation and enforcement remain (i.e. the ‘implementation gap’). Effective enforcement of measures regarding the implementation of a blue economy relies upon the availability of adequate human and

financial resources, the administrative and political will of enforcement agencies and the level of awareness of environmental laws (UNEP, 2011). In fact, decision making often prioritises short term economic and social benefits without considering environmental externalities, which may often offset the incomes and benefits of the maritime activities carried out in the basin (EEA, 1999).

## 2.2 The Blue Economy Project: structure and objectives

“A blue economy for a healthy Mediterranean - Measuring, Monitoring and Promoting an environmentally sustainable economy in the Mediterranean region” is a project funded by the MAVA Foundation, conceived with the aim to support the development of an environmentally sustainable marine-based economy in the Mediterranean region. In this sense, it intended to highlight and reinforce compatibilities between a healthy marine environment and a sound and more sustainable economy, as well as to define and adapt the “Blue economy” paradigm to the Mediterranean context according to the several international and regional governance efforts that are currently being deployed under different frameworks (e.g. UNEP, UNEP/MAP, UfM, EU, etc.).

To this purpose, the Project defined several operational objectives, including:

- (i) defining a Blue Economy in the Mediterranean region, taking into account its socioeconomic, cultural and environmental context;
- (ii) identifying existing indicators allowing monitoring a Blue Economy in the region,
- (iii) selecting tools and measures already set under ongoing regional governance frameworks aiming to attain a sustainable development in the Mediterranean, and
- (iv) recommending policies to foster a Blue Economy across Mediterranean riparian countries, in order to provide support to existing governance processes and reinforce synergies between them.

The Project is structured around three main work components, mutually supportive, each one having developed different lines of action and tasks (see Figure 1):

- **Component 1:** Define and monitor the environmentally sustainable – blue economy, adapted to the Mediterranean context
- **Component 2:** Support the Implementation of an environmentally sustainable economy
- **Component 3:** Promote and mainstream an environmentally sustainable economy

The project has been implemented by three UNEP/MAP Regional Activity Centres, i.e. Plan Bleu, Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Activity Centre (SCP/RAC) and the Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC).

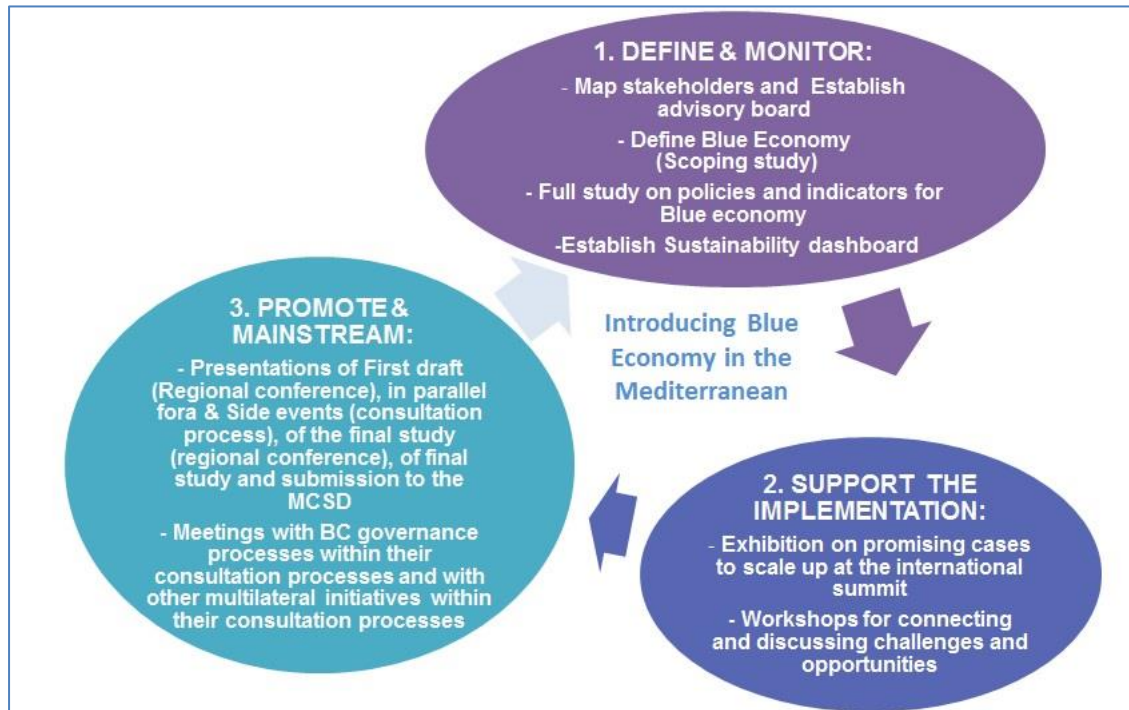


Figure 1 Framework of the project

## 2.3 Outputs of the Blue Economy Project

During its lifetime, the project has issued a number of outputs to respond to the objectives set under each of its components.

At a first stage, the global conceptual framework for a Blue Economy in the Mediterranean region has been drawn, and gaps and synergies with other comparable sustainable development initiatives at global level (i.e. UNEP, UE, and other frameworks, providing concepts of green and blue economy, green growth, resource efficiency, circular economy...) and at Mediterranean level (e.g. UNEP/MAP MSSD, the Mediterranean SCP Action Plan, the Ecosystem Approach, the ICZM Protocol, etc.). A concrete definition of Blue Economy has been proposed adapted to the Mediterranean regional context:

*“Blue Economy is a non-pollutant, resource-efficient and circular economy based on sustainable consumption and production patterns, enhancing human well-being and social equities, generating economic value and employment, and significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. The Blue Economy allows preserving Mediterranean healthy marine and coastal ecosystems and ensures the continuous delivery of goods and services for present and future generations.*

*The progress towards a successful Blue Economy relies on the sustainable development of key socioeconomic activities, which, in the Mediterranean region, are represented by:*

- *Fisheries*
- *Aquaculture*
- *Tourism and recreational activities*
- *Maritime transport and port activities*
- *Bio-prospecting or exploitation of biological resources*
- *Exploitation of renewable energy sources”*.

A critical review was subsequently undertaken, regarding existing indicators and tools aiming to consider both natural environment and economic development, as well as to achieve the Blue Economy vision at operational level through programs of measures (policies, strategies, etc.). Among results, a core set of most relevant indicators, particularly y adapted to the Mediterranean regional context, was proposed to give support to the development of a "Blue Economy".

Finally, this core set of indicators was simplified and modelised to allow a dashboard display of the environmental, social and economic trends regarding the “Blue Economy”. This Mediterranean sustainability dashboard is to be further developed as a web based interactive tool and available on-line so that users (policy makers, decision makers, researchers, CSOs, students...) can visualize past, current and future trends as well as the impacts of their decisions on the economic and environmental development of the region.

In addition, several workshops and events were organised to discuss challenges and opportunities, and thereby provide support to the implementation of the "Blue economy". They were based on promising eco and social innovation cases to be consider for upscaling, namely stories of entrepreneurs, change makers or policy initiatives. Conferences and events were also organised within regional/national forums (e.g. European Roundtable on Sustainable Production and Consumption, Mediterranean Economic week) to include feedbacks from key stakeholders (NGOs, business sector, local and national authorities, IGOs...).