



Mediterranean Action Plan  
Barcelona Convention



United Nations  
Environment Programme

## Press Release

### **Key Development for the Barcelona Convention: The Mediterranean Cetacean Corridor becomes a Marine Protected Area**

*The measure will benefit around 3,500 fin whales migrating through this strip of water, and more than 19,000 loggerhead turtles and 6,000 striped dolphins*

**02 August 2018, Athens** - A 1.350 km long marine corridor, located off the Spanish Mediterranean coast, has been declared 'Marine Protected Area' by the Government of Spain and proposed for inclusion in the list of 'Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance' (SPAMI List) in the framework of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean. This corridor is a migratory route used by many species of cetaceans in the Mediterranean. A total of 10 marine mammals are ranked as 'threatened' in this corridor, among which are the humpback whale and the striped dolphin.

*“The declaration of these 46.385 km<sup>2</sup> as a Marine Protected Area by Spain is certainly one of the most significant steps undertaken these last years towards the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean”,* declared Gaetano Leone, Coordinator of the UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan - Barcelona Convention Secretariat (MAP).

Several human activities can pose a threat to cetaceans, including fishing activities, maritime traffic, and offshore oil and gas exploration and exploitation. With this initiative, specific preventive measures will be put in place to regulate offshore human activities. This is expected to benefit the entire Mediterranean area, beyond the geographical limits of the corridor, as well as other sectors. Ecological benefits come from protecting species, habitats and ecosystem functions; and economic benefits come from ensuring the long-term sustainable use of natural resources and tourism incomes.

When effectively managed, Marine Protected Areas are important mechanisms for safeguarding ocean life. The Sustainable Development Goal's target is to conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas by 2020. Spain has now exceeded this target. However, progress remain to be made at regional and global level. Today, protected areas cover only 8.9 per cent of the total Mediterranean area, and 5.3 per cent of the total global ocean area.

To address this challenge, MAP developed a roadmap to support efforts to create Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean. Within this roadmap, MAP provides support to Mediterranean Governments to identify new priority sites, to monitor the implementation of measures, to conduct effectiveness assessments and to generate synergies with other relevant human activity sectors, in particular fisheries and tourism.

*“Implementing and effectively managing this Marine Protected Area will certainly be the next challenge to tackle and will require effort, collaboration and commitment”* underlines Gaetano Leone. *“The Barcelona Convention Secretariat congratulates the Government of Spain, and looks forward to the formal inclusion of the corridor in the SPAMI List during the 21st ordinary meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 21) in December 2019”*, declared Gaetano Leone, UN Environment/MAP Coordinator.



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The SPAMI List was created under the Barcelona Convention to promote cooperation in the management and conservation of natural areas, as well as in the protection of threatened species and their habitats. Today, the SPAMI List includes 35 sites. If the cetacean corridor is included, it will become the second largest SPAMI, after the Pelagos Sanctuary.

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### About MAP

The UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan-Barcelona Convention Secretariat (MAP) is a cooperative effort to support the implementation of the Barcelona Convention. Adopted in 1976, the Barcelona Convention aims to protect and improve the marine and coastal environment in the Mediterranean, whilst promoting regional and national plans contributing to sustainable development. Today, all 21 countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, as well as the European Union, are Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

### For more information please contact:

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