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*Mediterranean countries review the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development*

*Common objectives, cooperation, solidarity, equity and participatory governance for sustainable development in the Mediterranean*

**Athens – 18 February 2015:** Representatives of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, stakeholders and institutions active in environment and sustainable development discussed the first draft of the revised Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) during a two-day conference in Malta on 17 and 18 February 2015.

Hosted by the Government of Malta, in collaboration with the Coordination Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) and Plan Bleu, the conference was opened by the Honorable Leo Brincat, Minister for Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change of Malta. He reiterated the commitment of Malta to support the reviewed MSSD as a guiding strategy to inspire and direct activities in the area of sustainable development in a coherent way that involves all key stakeholders in the region. *"While summits offer strategic direction, we need to think, look and act beyond summits by showing through our collective efforts that sustainability can be cascaded in such a manner where connectivity with the general public will prevail"* he said.

Maltese singer Ms Ira Losco was declared by Minister Brincat Malta's Goodwill Ambassador for sustainable development for 2015. *"I promise to do my part in advocating environmentally-sustainable development whenever I will have the opportunity"*, she said when accepting the title.

In his welcoming speech Mr Gaetano Leone, Coordinator of UNEP/MAP encouraged all participants to engage and contribute to the discussions on the MSSD review. *"The Mediterranean faces emerging threats and continuing pressures. New tools and responses at our disposal like the ICZM Protocol, the ecosystem approach implementation and many complementary strategies and action plans, are conducive to a more effective strategic approach that includes environmental and socio-economic considerations for a full-fledged application of sustainable development in the Mediterranean region"*, he said.

The revised MSSD is structured around six thematic areas: seas and coasts; natural resources, rural development and food; climate; sustainable cities; transition towards a green economy; and, governance. It is being updated in light of the Rio+20 outcomes and builds on the ongoing global debate leading to the Post-2015 Agenda and the definition of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The revised Strategy aims to provide a strategic policy framework built upon a broad consultation process, to achieve the vision of a sustainable Mediterranean region, as well as to deploy sustainable development policies of riparian countries.

The review process and the draft revised MSSD were presented during the conference along with other MAP initiatives and strategic products that are being developed, including the Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan, the Ecosystem Approach Implementation in the Mediterranean, the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Regional Action Plan and the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework.

Participants worked in three groups, discussed the draft revised MSSD focusing on the subject of their corresponding substantive theme, and provided recommendations and comments. Comments will continue to be submitted until early March. a more advanced draft will be developed for further consideration.

The MSSD Review follows the decision of the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, in Istanbul in December 2013, to review the 2005 Strategy. The reviewed MSSD will be submitted for endorsement to the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable

Development (MCSD) in Morocco in June 2015, and for adoption to the next Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (CoP 19).

**Useful links:**

<http://planbleu.org/en/node/1141>

**Editorial Notes**

The MCSD was created in 1996 by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to convey their commitment to sustainable development and to the effective implementation, at the regional and national levels, of the decisions of the Earth Summit and the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development.

The MCSD is made up of 22 permanent members representing each of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (namely the 21 riparian countries and the European Union), as well as rotating representatives from the wider community.

The Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) was adopted in 1975 under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Seas Programme to monitor and protect the Mediterranean marine environment from pollution threats while ensuring the integrated development of the natural basin's resources on the basis of multilateral cooperation. In 1976, Mediterranean countries and the European Community adopted the Barcelona Convention as the legal basis for international cooperation in protecting the Mediterranean environment.

The Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre (PB/RAC), based in France, was established in 1977. Its mission is to provide the Contracting Parties with assessments of the state of the environment and development of the Mediterranean and a solid basis of environmental and sustainable development data, statistics, and indicators to support their action and decision-making process. It contributes to raising the awareness of Mediterranean stakeholders and decision-makers on environment and sustainable development issues in the region, by assisting in decision-making.

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