

Press

KIT

SOED

State of the Environment
and Development
in the Mediterranean



Mediterranean
Action Plan
Barcelona
Convention





For over 40 years, Mediterranean countries have relied on Plan Bleu, Regional Activity Centre of the Mediterranean Action Plan, to provide a solid understanding of the state, dynamics and interactions of environment and development in the Mediterranean. Public and private Mediterranean stakeholders have used Plan Bleu’s information and analyses as references for evidence-based decision-making for decades. The present report of State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean (SoED) continues in this tradition, providing recent information on a broad range of interconnected topics and insight for priority action. Prepared in collaboration with over 150 contributors and reviewers, it is a major milestone in our constant effort to strengthen dialogue between science, policy and practice. The report comes at a historic moment. During the first semester of 2020, COVID-19 has become an unprecedented global threat. The pandemic has already taken a hefty toll through loss of life, human suffering and massive economic disruptions in our region, with much of its medium- and long-term impacts yet to be fully apprehended. In response to the economic crisis caused by COVID-19, Mediterranean countries are in the process of introducing policies, measures and stimulus packages to support recovery. Millions of jobs are on the line and according to initial estimates, the crisis has knocked several percentage points off national income. There is no silver lining to be found in the COVID-19 pandemic, but we believe that our region must seize a historic opportunity to recover in a smart, evidence-based fashion.

In this context, SoED provides a most welcome opportunity to learning from the mistakes of the past and to recovering better. Building back better entails revisiting our relationship with nature. It calls for prioritizing green jobs, renewable energy, solutions with limited resource intensity and recognizing the potential of all generations and genders, to shape our collective future in the region. In this context, SoED represents the most comprehensive and updated knowledge base about environment and development in the Mediterranean for informed decision-making to overcome the unsustainable business-as-usual models.

**Gaetano Leone, Coordinator,
UNEP/MAP - Barcelona Convention Secretariat**

The Mediterranean Sea and its region are very complex; reporting on the Mediterranean environment and development is therefore a challenge. However, this report rises up to this challenge by being:

- evidence-based, with data and facts on major and lasting features of the regional environment. The report stresses the overall unsatisfactory state of the regional environment regarding air pollution, quality and quantity of water resources, waste management and nature protection;
- action-oriented, identifying - out of the Mediterranean complexity - the actions required for transitioning towards a sustainable and inclusive future, with particular focus on relieving key sectors’ pressures on the environment. Such actions are sought from individual governments or private companies, or based on international environmental agreements.

The report recognizes differences among riparian countries and sub-regions (e.g. north, south, east Mediterranean). Since Plan Bleu’s 2005 report, “A sustainable future for the Mediterranean: the Blue Plan’s environment and development outlook”, differences remain in human development, demographic trends, access to natural resources, and environmental protection. The Mediterranean is linked with the rest of the world through major straits or canals (Gibraltar, Turkish straits, Suez Canal). The region is also subject to important environmental risks. Differences among the Mediterranean countries further induce inequalities in resilience, as well as adaptation or prevention capacities to deal with ongoing or future challenges.

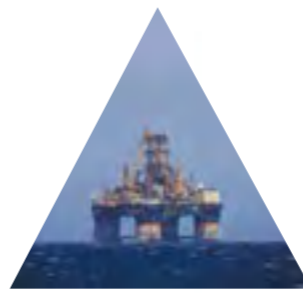
**Thierry Lavoux,
President of Plan Bleu**



State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean

SUMMARY

Preface	02
SoED 2020, in brief	05
UNEP/MAP and Plan bleu	06
Vulnerable resources under pressure	07
A climate change hotspot	08
The Mediterranean : a basin under pressure	09
Biodiversity : a wealth to protect	10
A healthy Mediterranean is possible but challenge remains	11
The Mediterranean, at the confluence of multiple forms of pollution	12
The need of profound changes for sustainable development	13
#SustainableMED : awareness for action	14
Contact & Documentation	15





SoED 2020, in brief

The report on the State of the Environment and Development (SoED) published today warns that the Mediterranean basin is facing environmental and developmental challenges of an unprecedented scale. Against a backdrop of rising inequalities, the alarming pace of biodiversity loss, the rising impacts of climate change and the unrelenting pressure on natural resources, including pollution, are pushing the region towards dangerous tipping points. Unless urgent and resolute action is taken to halt current trends, irreversible environmental degradation could have dire consequences for human health and livelihoods.

SoED, which was last published a decade ago, is produced by Plan Bleu, a Regional Activity Centre of the UN Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP). It is aimed at decision-makers and all actors in the fields of environment and development in the Mediterranean region. It is the most comprehensive and rigorous assessment of its kind and its production entailed a two-year effort of knowledge compilation undertaken by 150 experts mobilized by Plan Bleu from across the region. Representatives of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (21 Mediterranean countries and the European Union), for which UNEP serves as Secretariat, took part in the SoED preparation process.

The majors questions which this report addresses are :

What is the state, what are the trends and what can be observed in the environment and development in the Mediterranean? What are the causes? What are the responses? What are the achievements and shortcomings? What science-based priorities should be set for the next 10 years?

The report is the result of a collective effort by the Contracting Parties, members of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD), and MAP components and partners who have expertise in relevant fields in the Mediterranean. Under the general supervision of the MAP Coordinating Unit, Plan Bleu is responsible for the development process of SoED with the support of all MAP components.

Majors contributors are :

UN environment programme		Plan Bleu	MedEC Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change
2 YEARS	126 AUTORS	150 CONTRIBUTORS	

This is the first report of this scope in the Mediterranean. SoED reveals profound changes in the region. The Mediterranean will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 if no urgent measures are taken to respond to the alarming rate of biodiversity loss, the increasingly marked effects of climate change and the overconsumption of natural resources. The report states that the Mediterranean is facing environmental challenges of an unprecedented magnitude. However, there are reasons for hope if collective and lasting actions are put in place.

UNEP / MAP and Plan Bleu

MAP was established in 1975 as a Multilateral Environmental Agreement in the context of the Regional Seas Programme of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Mediterranean countries and the European Community approved MAP as the institutional framework for cooperation in addressing common challenges of marine environmental degradation.

Under the auspices of UNEP/MAP, a framework convention dedicated to the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution was adopted in 1976 and amended two decades later to encompass the key concepts adopted at the landmark 1992 Rio Conference and to include coasts in its scope. The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) was adopted in 1995. UNEP/MAP and the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention—21 Mediterranean countries and the European Union—have progressively erected a uniquely comprehensive institutional, legal, and implementing framework integrating essential building blocks for sustainability in the Mediterranean.

The MAP Components

In implementing its Programme of Work, the Coordinating Unit receives the technical support and assistance of the MAP Components in accordance with their individual mandates, and with specific decisions of the Contracting Parties.

The Components constitute a source of strength for the entire MAP-Barcelona Convention system. This set-up allows the system to acquire and develop essential expertise for the execution of the Convention, notably through the specific mandates of the RACs, while keeping a shared sense of direction and common purpose. Activities, programmes and projects implemented by the MAP Coordinating Unit and the MAP Components, including six Regional Activity Centres (RACs) operating from host Mediterranean countries, translate the vision of a healthy and prosperous Mediterranean into a gradually expanding constellation of achievements.

Plan Bleu : one of the 6 Regional Activity Centres of UNEP / MAP

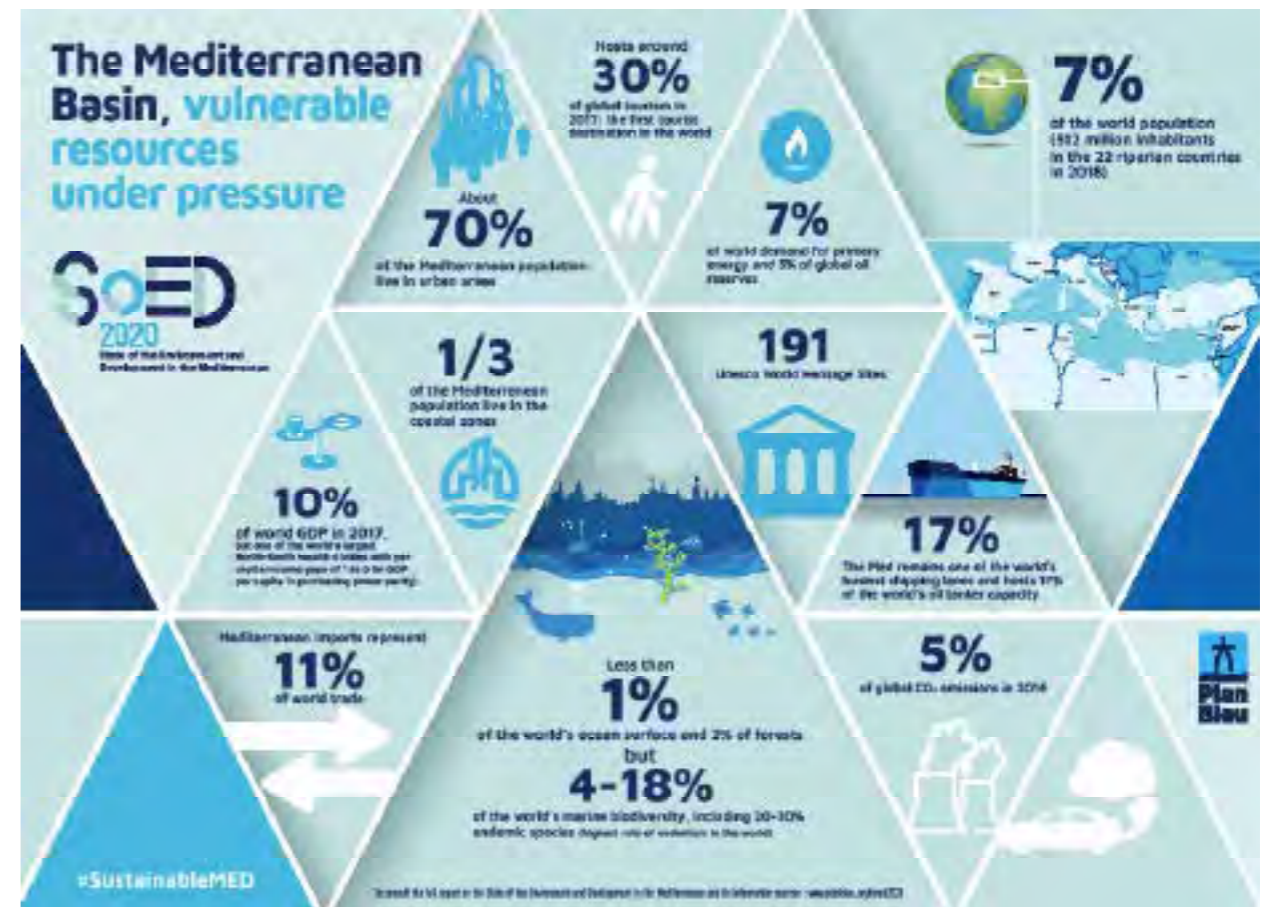
Plan Bleu produces studies and scenarios for the future in order to raise awareness of Mediterranean stakeholders and decision-makers regarding environment and sustainable development issues in the region.

Located in Marseille, Plan Bleu is managed by an association under French law (1901 law). Activities are carried out by a 15 strong team, supported by Mediterranean experts and validated by the Countries' Focal points. Funding is ensured by Mediterranean countries and the European Union, as well as by an allocation from the French Ministry for the Environment and some inputs to the common works and projects provided by various institutions and partners. Our missions includes Observing environment and development to enlighten decision makers shaping possible futures for sustainable development, monitoring the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, integrating climate change as a priority, supporting the transition towards a green and blue economy and shedding socio-economic light for the appropriate management of Mediterranean resources

Vulnerable resources under pressure

The Mediterranean is a fragile eco-region with unique cultural heritage and exceptional biodiversity.

Development is focused on its coastal areas, which are subject to multiple pressures. Coastal urbanization, mass tourism, overexploitation and salinization of freshwater, pollution and marine litter, overfishing, expansion of maritime traffic and non-indigenous species are common concerns.



A climate change hotspot

The Mediterranean basin is warming 20% faster than the global average, in particular because of the faster warming of ambient air and sea surface in all seasons.

While the average air temperature in the world is now about 1.1 ° C above pre-industrial values, the Mediterranean region is approaching a warming of 1.6 ° C. The IPCC predicts a rise in temperatures of 2 to 3 ° C by 2050, and an increase of 3 to 5 ° C by 2100 in this region.



SoED EXCERPT

Adapting to climate change in agricultural, urban and coastal areas is expected to require significant investments. Anticipating adaptation, choosing “no regrets” solutions including nature-based solutions, and effectively involving the private sector (including banks and insurance companies) would reduce financing needs. Improving public access to information and public involvement, as well as raising awareness of sustainable development are essential to act in an inclusive manner in favor of transitions and to raise the political profile of environmental issues. Effective policies for a transition to sustainability require an inclusive and integrated approach that brings about changes in behavior at all levels.

* The report guides several objectives and action plans to be put in place. Find all of these recommendations in the summary or the full report to download on www.planbleu.org/soed

The Mediterranean : a basin under pressure

The concentration of populations in coastal areas continued unabated in the past decade. Between 1965 and 2015, urban pressure continued to increase in three-quarters of Mediterranean countries with built-up areas at least doubling in the coastal strip (less than one kilometer from the sea).

This has resulted in the loss of surface of natural coastal ecosystems, thus affecting the services associated with them, and in heightened coastal risks for the populations that depend on them. This raises the issue of enforcement of the Protocol of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) of the Barcelona Convention, which stipulates that Contracting Parties must establish in coastal zones an area of at least 100 m in width where construction is prohibited. The phenomenon of “littoralisation” contributes to the destruction of fragile natural environments and agricultural lands which play a crucial role not only in carbon capture, but also in flood regulation and maintenance of biological balance. This also has consequences on the survival and development of a traditional peasant activity (crops of cereals and legumes with arboriculture) which avoids or slows down the rural exodus.

40%
LINEAR
COASTAL
ARTIFICIALIZED

+5000kms
OF ARTIFICIALIZED
COASTLINES BY
2025



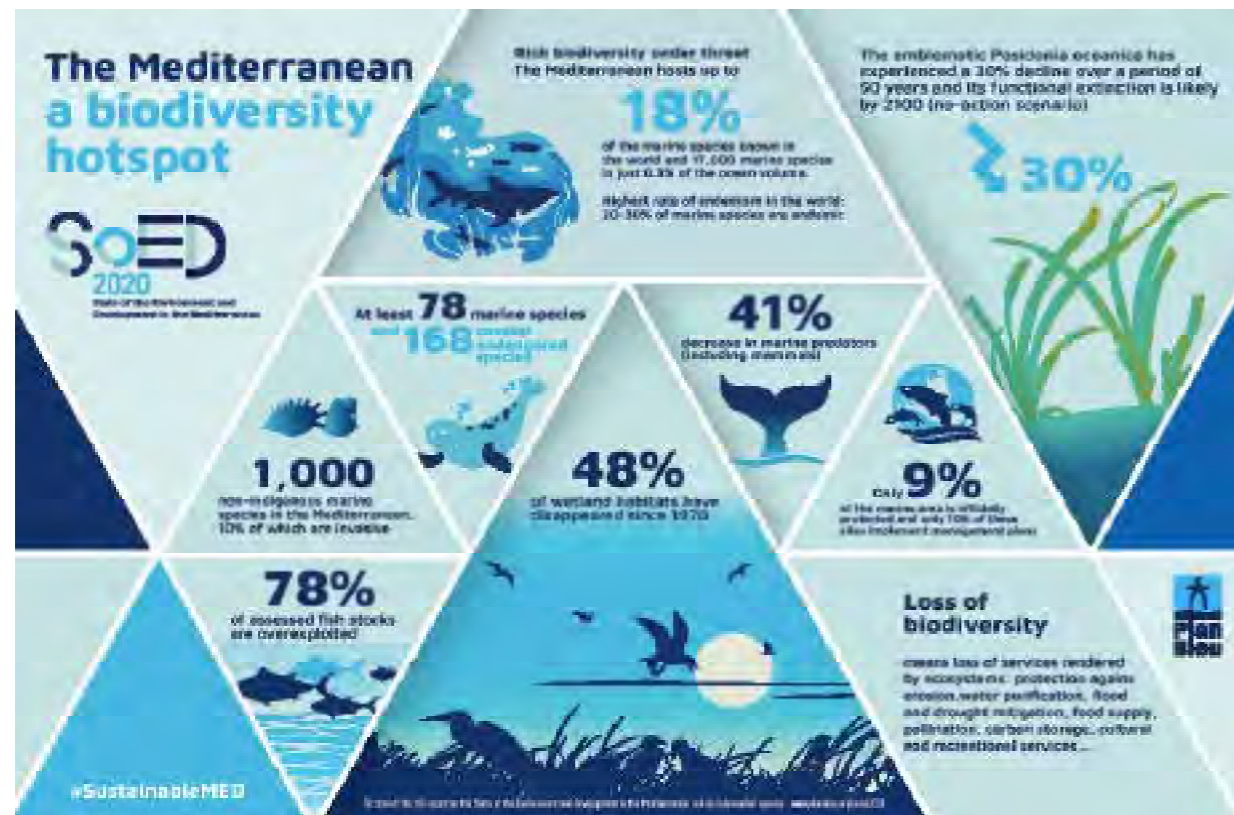
SoED EXCERPT

Dealing with the multiple pressures of the economic sectors (tourism, transport, industry, mining) presupposes the integration of environmental issues in the design of investments and projects. Careful consideration should be given to the transport sector, to investments and maintenance of road, rail, port and airport infrastructure and their environmental impact, to vehicle pollution control, to the transition to new ones. technologies (electricity, hydrogen), reducing the environmental impacts of civil and military maritime transport. The industry and extractive industries must improve their efficiency in the context of a circular economy characterized by the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and attention to the production and use of chemicals.

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Biodiversity : a global wealth to protect

Fishing practices pose a particular threat to fisheries : 78% of stocks are subject to overfishing, while 18% of total catches are discarded. As for aquaculture, which is developing significantly, impacts are not negligible with the use of wild species for farmed food fish, the transfer of native species and the releases of nitrogen and phosphorus.



SoED EXCERPT

There is an urgent need to radically change production and consumption patterns in the Mediterranean region in order to make resolute progress towards sustainable and inclusive development. This transformation makes it possible to focus on concerns related to climate change, the protection of biodiversity, the circular economy and the transition to a blue / green economy. This is in line with the United Nations 2030 Development Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the recent Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD).

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A healthy Mediterranean is possible, but challenges remain

The relationship between human health and natural ecosystems is increasingly attracting the attention of researchers. Human health and well-being are influenced by the goods and services provided by ecosystems, including in the Mediterranean region.

Human activities such as bottom trawling and microbial and chemical contamination threaten Mediterranean marine organisms that provide bioactive substances used to develop new drugs to treat major human diseases, including cancer. Contamination also adversely affects the recreational use of coastal and deep-sea waters. It is therefore necessary to preserve the goods and services provided by Mediterranean marine ecosystems in order to enhance the benefits and minimize the risks to health.

IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, **15%** OF DEATHS ARE ATTRIBUTED TO MODIFIABLE ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS, COMPARED TO 23% GLOBALLY.

IN 2016 **228 000** PEOPLE DIED PREMATURELY FROM EXPOSURE TO AIR POLLUTION, THE MAIN CAUSE OF ENVIRONMENTAL MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY IN THE REGION.



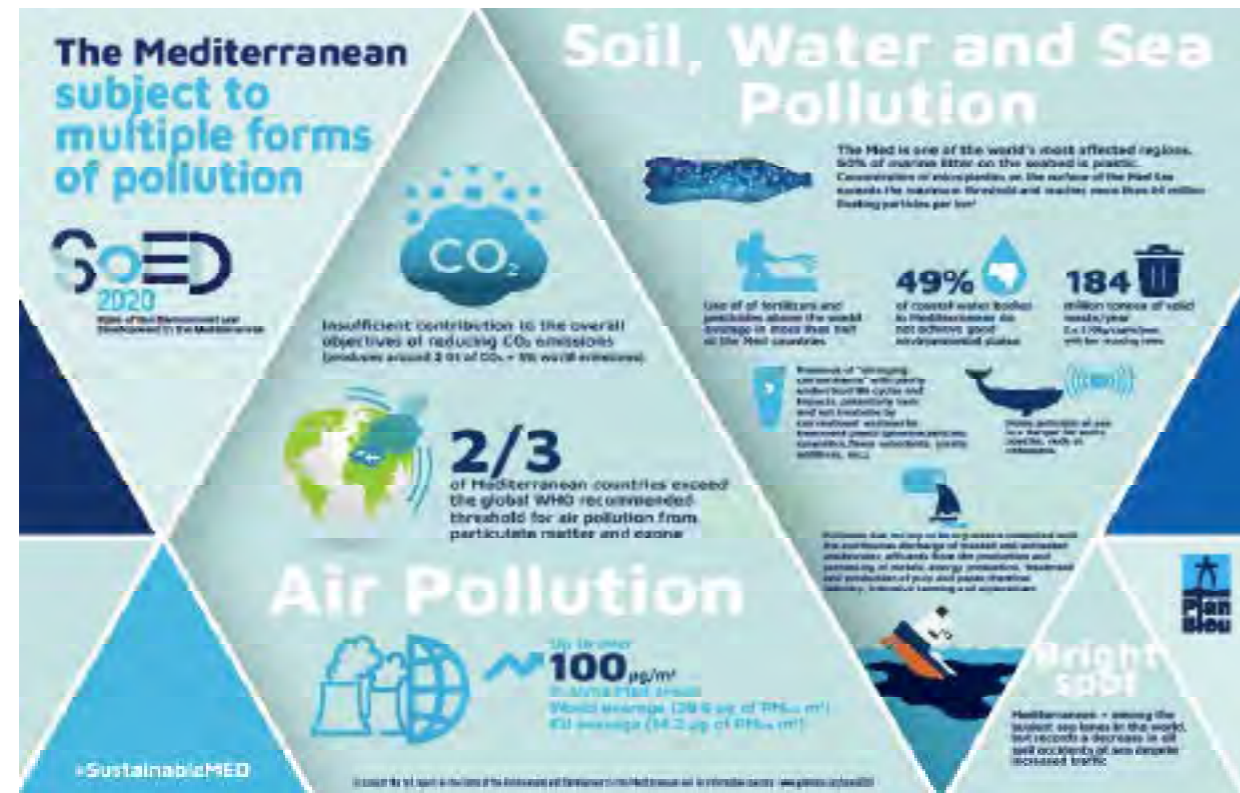
Thierry Lavoux, President Plan Bleu & Jacques Theys, Vice President Plan Bleu

"The current crisis can be seen as an opportunity to become aware of the very great fragility of development in the Mediterranean area, and to put the countries that make it up on more sustainable trajectories and resilient to external shocks. Coming after other crises, the coronavirus crisis can have the very positive consequence of raising awareness of the need to reduce some of these structural vulnerabilities. Developing resilience and cooperation at the level of territories or communities is one of the possible solutions - and many Mediterranean societies have demonstrated during the first phase of the crisis a lot of capacity in this direction. But this will not be enough, it will be necessary in all areas of activity to imagine - much more than has already been done - disruptive development methods that will make it possible to avoid dead ends or impossible disaster situations in the future. However, we now know from experience that the best solution to reduce these risks of deadlock or disaster - while improving present living conditions - is to move as quickly as possible towards greener solutions. This is the very definition and purpose of sustainable development - which is ultimately very close to intelligent prevention of major risks, including those of pandemics? And it is an important role for WFP to foster these structural transformations - without which its goals cannot be achieved."

The Mediterranean: at the confluence of multiple forms of pollution

The Mediterranean is one of the most affected regional seas by marine litter due to the increase in the use of plastics, the lack of recycling, unsustainable consumption patterns, inadequate or inefficient waste management, strong pressures from tourism and maritime transport, associated with significant river flows.

Many illegal dumping sites are present along the coast and waste recycling, which is hindered by collection processes that are too often inefficient, generally remains minimal on the southern and eastern shores. Even if marine litter from land-based sources remains predominant, marine litter from maritime sources actively contributes to the problem, representing on average 32% of litter in the European Union, and reaching 50% in some areas of the basin.



SoED EXCERPT

In 2016, the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention adopted the Action Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in the Mediterranean. The Action Plan recognizes the need to change patterns of consumption and production in order to separate human development from degradation of the marine and coastal environment and provides guidelines to foster a transition to patterns of consumption and production. sustainable, long-term sustainability, circular economy and new paradigms for the use of resources, taking into account climate change and participating in the 2030 Agenda. The action plan is complemented by a roadmap, and further efforts are required for its effective implementation.

* The report guides several objectives and action plans to be put in place. Find all of these recommendations in the summary or the full report to download on www.planbleu.org/soed

Profound changes for sustainable development are needed

Human activities and behavior are the main drivers of environmental change in the world, and the Mediterranean is no exception. These activities place increasing pressure on ecosystems leading to degradation of the environment and livelihoods. A further exacerbation of the existing fragilities of the eco-socio-system Mediterranean is projected.

IPCC * considers the Mediterranean region to be "highly vulnerable to climate change" and states that it "will suffer from multiple stresses and systemic failures due to climate change".

* 5th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change



#SustainableMED : awareness for action

The Mediterranean region has one of the highest ecological deficits in the world. The ecological footprint per capita in the Mediterranean (3.2 hag / inhabitant) is higher than the world average (2.8 hag / inhabitant), while the biocapacity per inhabitant - making it possible to support this footprint - is lower than the world average in the majority of Mediterranean countries (except in France, Croatia, Montenegro and Slovenia). SoED accurately points out the risks faced by all countries in terms of climate change, maintenance of biodiversity, sustainable management of resources, control of solid or air pollution (waste, chemicals, particles, etc.), and underlines weaknesses in governance that make it challenging to deal with them.



VIDEO : SoED 2020



FLYER: SoED 2020

CONTACT & DOCUMENTATION

For more information and to download the various documents of the State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean Report, please visit :

www.planbleu.org/soed

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We are not on the path to achieving the goals we have set for ourselves! Countries need to work on resilience, not growth.

François Guerquin, Director PLAN BLEU

The crises that the Mediterranean region is going through today, whether from a health, food, social or climatic point of view, clearly show the region's vulnerability and how little we are prepared to face it. This report shows that it is possible to anticipate these crises together and improve the region's resilience, which will be one of our great challenges for tomorrow.

Gaetano Leone, Coordinator, UNEP/MAP - Barcelona Convention Secretariat

By shedding light on the mistakes of the past, the report's findings can guide a green renaissance in the Mediterranean. Embarking on greener development paths now can halt the environmental degradation trends and salvage hard-won achievements in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).





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