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**STATE OF PROGRESS OF THE MedMPAnet PROJECT
AND THE PROJECT FOR ESTABLISHING SPAMIs
IN OPEN SEAS, INCLUDING THE DEEP SEA**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
FOREWORD	2
1. Introduction	3
2. State of progress of the MedMPAnet project	4
2.1 Context	4
2.2 Objective.....	4
2.3 Main activities	5
2.4 Expected results	5
2.5 State of progress	5
2.5.1 Establishment of coordination mechanisms for regional MPA management	5
2.5.2 Identification and planning of new MPAs to extend the regional network and enhance its ecological representativeness	6
2.5.3 Improving MPA management	9
2.5.4 Ensuring financial sustainability of regional and national MPA networks	10
3. Project for supporting the establishment of SPAMIs in open seas, including the deep seas	11
3.1 Objective.....	11
3.2 Reminder of the first phase's activities and results.....	11
3.3 Second phase's objective and activities	12
3.4 State of progress since June 2010	13
3.5 Planned activities until December 2011	15
3.6 Next biennium.....	15

FOREWORD

This document was prepared by RAC/SPA in view of informing the Focal Points for SPAs during their Tenth Ordinary Meeting (Marseilles, 17-20 May 2011) about the progress registered, during the intersession, in the implementation of the two main projects led by RAC/SPA in the domain of Specially Protected Areas creation and management, and more specifically towards the proper implementation of the “Regional working programme for the coastal and marine protected areas in the Mediterranean including the high seas”, adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, during their Sixteenth Ordinary Meeting held in Marrakech in 2009.

These projects aiming at the establishment of a comprehensive and coherent Mediterranean network of coastal and marine protected areas are the following: (i) the “Regional Project for the Development of a Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MPAs) Network through the boosting of Mediterranean MPAs Creation and Management (acronym: “MedMPAnet”, part of the UNEP GEF Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem “MedPartnership”), and (ii) the “Project for Establishing SPAMIs in Open Seas, including the Deep Sea”.

STATE OF PROGRESS OF THE MedMPAnet PROJECT AND THE PROJECT FOR ESTABLISHING SPAMIs IN OPEN SEAS, INCLUDING THE DEEP SEA

1. Introduction

The World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002 highlighted the need to promote ocean conservation and called for the establishment of representative networks of marine protected areas by 2012.

The Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted in 2004 a programme of work on protected areas with the objective of the establishment by 2012 of comprehensive, effectively managed, and ecologically representative national and regional systems of marine protected areas.

Taking into consideration the CBD decisions, the Mediterranean Parties to the Barcelona Convention decided in 2008 to promote measures for the establishment of a comprehensive and coherent Mediterranean network of coastal and marine protected areas by 2012.

In the 2009 Marrakech Declaration, the States were called to continue the establishment of marine protected areas and to pursue the protection of biodiversity with a view to the establishment by 2012 of a network of marine protected areas, including on the high seas, in accordance with the relevant international legal framework and the objectives of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

In 2009, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention have also adopted the "Regional working programme for the coastal and marine protected areas in the Mediterranean including the high seas" which aims to support the establishment of a comprehensive and coherent Mediterranean network of coastal and marine protected areas.

Furthermore, in 2010, at the Nagoya Conference of the Parties, the Parties to the CBD, other Governments and relevant organizations were invited to cooperate, as appropriate, collectively or on a regional or sub-regional basis, to identify and protect ecologically or biologically significant areas in open-ocean waters and deep-sea habitats in need of protection, including by establishing representative networks of marine protected areas in accordance with international law and based on scientific information.

On a Mediterranean scale, the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity (SPA/BD) and the Regional working programme for the coastal and marine protected areas in the Mediterranean including the high seas are the main tools the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention possess for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity.

By implementing two complementary projects, the MAP-RAC/SPA supports the Parties to the Barcelona Convention with technical and financial assistance to undertake activities which contribute to develop a Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas network in coastal and open sea waters:

- The MedMPAnet project which aims to develop Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Protected Areas network through the boosting of Mediterranean coastal MPAs creation and management;
- The project for supporting the establishment of SPAMIs in open seas, including the deep seas.

2. State of progress of the MedMPAnet project

2.1 Context

The MedMPAnet project is part of the UNEP GEF Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem “MedPartnership”. The objective of the MedPartnership project, which includes 4 components, is to leverage reforms and investments to address marine and coastal biodiversity conservation priorities for the Mediterranean.

Component 3 (Conservation of Biological Diversity: implementation of SAP BIO and related NAPs) specifically addresses the decline of biodiversity and fisheries in the Mediterranean and further branches off in 2 sub-components: Sub-component 3.1: Conservation of coastal and marine diversity through the development of a Mediterranean MPA network, and Sub-component 3.2: Promotion of the sustainable use of fisheries resources through the application of ecosystem-based management approaches.

Specifically, Sub-component 3.1 is implemented through two complementary projects, the MedMPAnet project led by RAC/SPA and the MedPAN South project led by the Mediterranean Programme of WWF (WWF-MedPO).

RAC/SPA and WWF-MedPO are executing complementary activities, where RAC/SPA's focus is the identification and creation of new MPAs and WWF-MedPO's focus is for the improved management of existing MPAs (and about-to-be-created MPAs), as well as several joint activities for training, coordination and communication.

The MedMPAnet project is funded by the European Commission (EC), the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID) and French Global Environmental Fund (FFEM). Project financing is guaranteed by all three co-financers until June 2014, date of project expiration according to the MedPartnership requirement.

Twelve Mediterranean riparian countries are involved in the project, namely: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Montenegro, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. The Palestinian Authority is also intended to be involved.

The main target groups are MPAs managers, practitioners and relevant authorities in the above-mentioned beneficiary countries.

2.2 Objective

The overall objective of the MedMPAnet project consists in enhancing the effective conservation of regionally important coastal and marine biodiversity features, through the creation of an ecologically coherent MPA network in the Mediterranean region, as required by Barcelona Convention's SPA/BD Protocol.

This will effectively provide assistance to the partner countries to implement several prioritized elements of the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (SAP BIO) through the provision of a series of enabling activities at national, sub-regional and regional levels and will also expand the existing Network of MPA managers in the Mediterranean to include the rest of the Mediterranean.

2.3 Main activities

A set of activities will be implemented around four action categories:

- Demonstration Projects for MPA creation (Inception, planning, zoning and development), including Local stakeholder participation and Financial sustainability mechanisms (Albania, Croatia, Libya, Montenegro and Tunisia).
- Establishment of priority activities to create MPAs (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro and Syria); identification of stakeholders & potential partnerships (Albania, Libya and Morocco); and characterisation of priority marine sites suitable to become MPAs (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro and Morocco).
- Technical assistance, exchange of experience and capacity-building to improve new/existing MPAs management (all partner countries).
- Communication and Public awareness (all partner countries).

2.4 Expected results

The main expected results are the following:

- Implementation of several actions prioritized by the SAP BIO programme.
- Existing and proposed MPAs will coalesce to form part of a coherent and geographically balanced network that exists at both institutional and ecological levels.
- Greater representation of the Mediterranean's vulnerable and critical coastal and marine habitats brought under statutory protection.
- Tools and capacity for the management of recognized Mediterranean coastal and marine biodiversity sites improved.
- Permanent coordination, monitoring, evaluation and support mechanisms for regional coastal and marine biodiversity conservation.
- Innovative approaches to the funding of regionally important existing and future coastal and marine biodiversity conservation initiatives in place.

2.5 State of progress

2.5.1 Establishment of coordination mechanisms for regional MPA management

a) Establishment of the project coordination unit

The project team, made up of four full-time team members: (i) a Project Officer, (ii) a Project Coordination & Technical Backstopping Officer, (iii) a Technical Assistant Officer, and (iv) an Administrative Officer, was fully staffed during the second quarter of 2010, despite some administrative and financial difficulties (non-availability of co-financing for project staff salaries). These difficulties could have severely hindered the project's smooth and timely execution, without a positive reaction and active solution seeking from both RAC/SPA and the MedPartnership management unit sides.

b) Organisation of the Inception Meeting

RAC/SPA convened the 2nd Meeting of the SAP BIO National Correspondents that served also as an Inception Workshop for the MedMPAnet project. This Meeting was held in Istanbul (Turkey) on 2 June 2011, with the support of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Turkey. It allowed countries a full comprehension of scopes and activities of the MedMPAnet project. The discussions of the meeting are reflected in the "Report of the 2nd Meeting of the SAP BIO National Correspondents (Istanbul, 2 June 2010)" (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.349/4).

Prior to the SAP BIO National Correspondents Meeting, RAC/SPA held a small consultation meeting among the SAP BIO Advisory Committee members that were present in Istanbul, on 1 June 2010.

c) Organisation of SAP BIO Advisory Committee and National Correspondents meetings in 2011

RAC/SPA is planning to organize a SAP BIO Advisory Committee Meeting and a SAP BIO National Correspondents Meeting in September 2011, planned as part of the MedMPAnet project activities and included in its funding.

d) Developing communication and information tools and raising awareness of key stakeholders on MPAs values and importance

The main communication activities implemented by RAC/SPA as part of the MedMPAnet project include:

- a website for the MedMPAnet project (<http://medmpanet.rac-spa.org>) was developed and launched in the second half of 2010;
- The MedMPAnet activities and major achievements are regularly featured on the MedMPAnet website as well as on RAC/SPA electronic newsletter and the MedPartnership collaborative web portal (www.themedpartnership.org);
- A leaflet featuring the objectives and scope of the project was produced and disseminated in several events;
- The MedMPAnet project contributed technically and financially to some activities and events led by the MedPAN Network. The network is now pervasive in the South and East of the Mediterranean with most MedMPAnet project countries represented;
- Conference in national and regional events (Korba, Hyères, Marseilles, Pirana, Sidi Mechreg, Tunis,...)
- A video film was initially planned for preparation in 2011 in partnership with the environmental national authorities in Libya (footage already made during the field surveys executed in Libya, in 2010);
- The MedMPAnet project's communication strategy is under preparation based on the orientations provided by the MedPartnership communication strategy prepared in March 2011. It will be focused on the promotion of the project in the region in the short term and the MPA awareness activities in the longer term.

2.5.2 Identification and planning of new MPAs to extend the regional network and enhance its ecological representativeness

a) Establish priority activities needed to create MPAs (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro and Syria)

A number of preliminary activities and meetings have been undertaken to establish the priority activities needed to create MPAs in Lebanon, Libya and Syria.

RAC/SPA undertook a Planning and Coordination Meeting for the MedMPAnet project activities in Lebanon, on 24 February 2011 in Beyrouth, with officers from the Lebanese Ministry of Environment. This meeting allowed discussing and reviewing the project activities initially planned for Lebanon based on the 2003 SAP BIO identified gaps.

It was agreed that the MedMPAnet project activities in Lebanon be fully harmonised with the relevant achieved, underway or planned projects at country's level. The MedMPAnet project activities were then reoriented towards concrete achievements, rather than priority listing, including field surveys to collect data and improve ecological knowledge on the marine and coastal biodiversity.

The first survey by RAC/SPA international and Lebanese national consultants' team is planned during the first half of June 2011.

In Libya, the preliminary Planning and Coordination Meeting in the country, conducted on 15-16 June 2011, led to the fact that this activity was partially achieved by IUCN-Med, as part of its MedRAS project (phase 1). It was then agreed to hire a national consultant that will complement and adapt the preliminary work made by IUCN.

Official communication with Libyan environmental authorities in Tripoli have been interrupted since February 2011 due to the current political situation of the country.

Concerning Syria, RAC/SPA conducted a Planning and Coordination Meeting in Damascus on 27 February 2011 in the Syrian Ministry of State for Environment Affairs, in presence of a number of other national relevant institutions. During this meeting, the project activities planning, stakeholders and implementation modalities were agreed upon. A national/international expert field assignment in situ (Lattakia and Tartous areas, Northern Syria) initially planned at mid-April 2011, has been postponed to a later date for security reasons.

As far as Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro partner countries are concerned, preliminary coordination and planning meetings are still to be conducted at country levels, in order to set-up operative plans for the MedMPAnet project implementation as a whole in these countries. No dates have been yet set for such meetings by national environmental authorities, despite RAC/SPA official requests.

b) Identify stakeholder group and potential partnerships (Albania, Libya and Morocco)

In Morocco, the MedMPAnet project has run a Planning and Coordination Meeting on 9-11 December 2010, in which the project work-plan has been presented and agreed upon by all concerned partners, and the intervention sites have been identified, during a rapid prospecting of the Northern Moroccan coasts near the Nador area.

A Memorandum of Understanding is under signature process between RAC/SPA and the "*Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte contre la Désertification*". The expertise and field surveying activities will be starting in the second half of 2011.

Concerning Libya, this activity is meant to be executed by the national consultant identified for the above activity aiming at establishing priority activities to create MPAs along the Libyan coasts. However, as mentioned above, official communication with Libyan environmental authorities in Tripoli have been interrupted since February 2011 due to the country's current political situation.

As far as Albania is concerned, RAC/SPA is communicating with Albanian environmental authorities in view of setting a date for RAC/SPA visit to Tirana, in view of conducting the agreed planning and coordination meeting of the project's pilot activities in Albania.

c) Characterization of priority marine sites suitable to become MPAs (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro and Morocco)

This activity have been initiated in Morocco, through the initial choice of the Cap des Trois Fourches as the main intervention site, during the rapid prospecting of the Northern Moroccan coasts near the Nador area.

Please refer to Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro and Morocco relevant paragraphs in the above a) and b) sub-sections.

d) Demonstration Projects for MPA creation: Inception, planning, zoning and development of newly created MPAs (Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and Tunisia)

The demonstration project in Tunisia, aiming at the inception, planning, zoning and development of the newly created MPA of Kuriat Islands, has been initiated, through the running of an on-site field survey on 1-4 July 2010. An other complementary survey is to be conducted by end of May 2011. These complementary surveys in the area are being conducted in order to complement available knowledge on important marine and coastal habitats in the region and that will serve for the zoning of the protected area.

RAC/SPA undertook a Planning and Coordination Meeting for the MedMPAnet project pilot activities in Croatia, on 27 April 2011 in Zagreb, with officers from the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Environmental Protection, State Institute for Nature Protection and other relevant national institutions and stakeholders. This meeting allowed agreeing about the project implementation modalities and schedule. It was also agreed that pilot site(s) will be agreed upon at country's level through an internal national consultation that will be conducted before June 2011 by the Croatian Ministry of Culture's Nature Protection Directorate.

Concerning Albania and Montenegro, please refer to relevant paragraphs in the above a) and b) sub-sections.

e) Identification of local stakeholder participation mechanism for the pilot MPAs (Albania, Croatia, Libya and Montenegro)

This activity concerning the identification of local stakeholder participation mechanism for the pilot MPAs will be implemented as part of the demonstration projects presented in sub-sections d) and g).

f) MPA creation guidelines and teaching packages

This activity aims at developing practical methodologies to create sustainable MPAs and make them available to managers and practitioners.

For this aim, and during 2010, a number of guidelines and technical tools for MPA creation and management elaborated within the Barcelona Convention context (SPA/BD Protocol) have been reviewed and electronically edited (in both English and French versions), in order to be disseminated to the Mediterranean MPA managers and decision-makers, through the MedMPAnet website, namely:

- Guidelines for setting up and management of specially protected areas for marine turtles in the Mediterranean;
- Guidelines for the establishment and management of Marine Protected Areas for cetaceans; and
- Guidelines for management and monitoring threatened population of marine and coastal bird species and their important areas in the Mediterranean.

RAC/SPA is currently collaborating with the MedPAN (Network of MPA managers in the Mediterranean) Secretariat in the running of a region-wide guides and technical tools needs assessment, among MPA managers and practitioners and relevant authorities in the Mediterranean countries.

Based on the assessment, RAC/SPA will launch the elaboration of a set of guidelines and teaching packages as part of the MedMPAnet project.

g) Demonstration Project in Libya: the environmental case for a national network of MPAs in Libya

The environmental case for a national network of MPAs demonstration in Libya, jointly implemented by RAC/SPA and WWF-MedPO, has been initiated in 2010.

A first marine survey was conducted by RAC/SPA and WWF-MedPO to assess the biological features and the ecological interest of Ain Al-Ghazala marine and coastal area. More than ten Libyan and international experts completed the assessment on 19-26 September 2010.

A second marine survey was conducted by RAC/SPA and the *Conservatoire du Littoral* to assess the biological features and the ecological interest of El Kouf National Park marine and coastal area. More than fifteen Libyan and international experts completed the assessment on 23-31 October 2010.

The data collected was used by the Environmental General Authority of Libya to declare the Ain Al-Ghazala site as a marine protected area, and will be further used for the elaboration of management proposals for the concerned areas.

During the surveys, the international experts delivered a brief on-the-job training on MPA siting and socio-economic aspects related to MPA establishment.

Currently, and as mentioned above, official communication with Libyan environmental authorities in Tripoli have been interrupted since February 2011 due to the country's current political situation.

2.5.3 Improving MPA management

a) Organizing 3 Mediterranean MPA Regional Training Workshops for MPA managers, practitioners and relevant authorities

This activity is led by WWF-MedPO, but implemented in collaboration with RAC/SPA. In this concern RAC/SPA has technically and financially contributed to the two first Regional Training Workshops.

The 1st Regional Training Workshop on MPA Management Planning was held in Tabarka (Tunisia) on 14-23 November 2009. 41 participants from 13 countries along the East and South of the Mediterranean took part to the training.

The 2nd Regional Training Workshop on Planning for Sustainable Fisheries in MPAs was held in Kas, (Turkey) on 2-11 October 2010, with the participation of 48 MPA managers, practitioners and officials from relevant authorities from 11 countries in the South and East of the Mediterranean and 8 experts from the region.

The 3rd Regional Training Workshop is dedicated to "Planning for Sustainable Tourism in MPAs" and will be held early October 2011 in Croatia.

b) Organizing specific technical assistance and exchange/twinning programmes

RAC/SPA has technically and financially supported the Syrian environmental authorities in running a three-phase intensive training programme on Marine Protected Areas' Management Plan Preparation and Implementation (February, April and October 2009). Around 25 local experts, MPA managers and national concerned authorities' officers received the training. The course was entirely delivered in Arabic language with the support of Arabic-speaking experts from IUCN ROWA office (of Amman).

Participants to the above-mentioned 2nd Regional Training Workshop developed specific projects intended to enhance their capacity to achieve sustainable fisheries targets within MPAs, over the 10-12 months following the training. These projects were part of a contract agreement (Implementation Agreement). Following the training, 11 Implementation Agreements were developed (one for each country attending the training). For each agreement signed with WWF-MedPO or RAC/SPA, each country commits to implement an action relative to fisheries management objectives, where it is a project, a capacity-building activity or an exchange visit. Specifically, WWF-MedPO provided direct support to 7 countries (Algeria, Croatia, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey), while RAC/SPA provided support to 2 countries (Albania and Montenegro).

c) Running on-job-training for managers, practitioners and relevant authorities in identified demonstration areas, on planning, management and ecological aspects of MPAs

Taking advantage of the field ecological surveys that have been undertaken in Libya and Tunisia, on-job trainings have been delivered in Arabic to about 14 local experts (6 in Libya, and 8 in Tunisia). These on-job trainings have embraced various themes, such as: benthos sampling using underwater visual census and cameras; fish sampling using underwater visual census; recognizing animals and plants underwater; alien species; importance of socio-cultural aspects in planning MPAs; the impact of MPAs on society and human impact on MPAs, etc.

2.5.4 Ensuring financial sustainability of regional and national MPA networks

a) Financial analysis for the establishment of new MPAs

This activity is planned for 2012-2013.

b) Demonstration Project: Demonstrating financial sustainability mechanisms for new MPAs in four different areas (Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and Tunisia)

This activity concerning the identification of financial sustainability mechanisms for the pilot MPAs will be implemented as the crowning part of the demonstration projects presented in sub-section d) and are planned starting from 2012.

3. Project for supporting the establishment of SPAMIs in open seas, including the deep seas

3.1 Objective

The long term objective of this project implemented since 2008 is to assist the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to promote through the SPAMI system the setting-up of a representative network of marine protected areas in the Mediterranean open seas, including the deep seas.

The implementation of the project is under the guidance of a Steering Committee made of international and regional organizations:

- UNEP's Division for Environmental Policy Implementation - Regional Seas Programme (UNEP/DEPI) and Division for Environmental Law and Conventions (UNEP/DELC)
- Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan (MEDU, UNEP/MAP)
- European Commission
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN-FAO)
- General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)
- Secretariat of the OSPAR Convention
- International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)
- Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS)
- Secretariat of the Pelagos Sanctuary
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN Med)
- Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM)
- World Wide Fund for Nature's Mediterranean Programme Office (WWF MedPO).

The project is financially supported by the European Commission and the Mediterranean Trust Funds (MFT) according to a two-phase process.

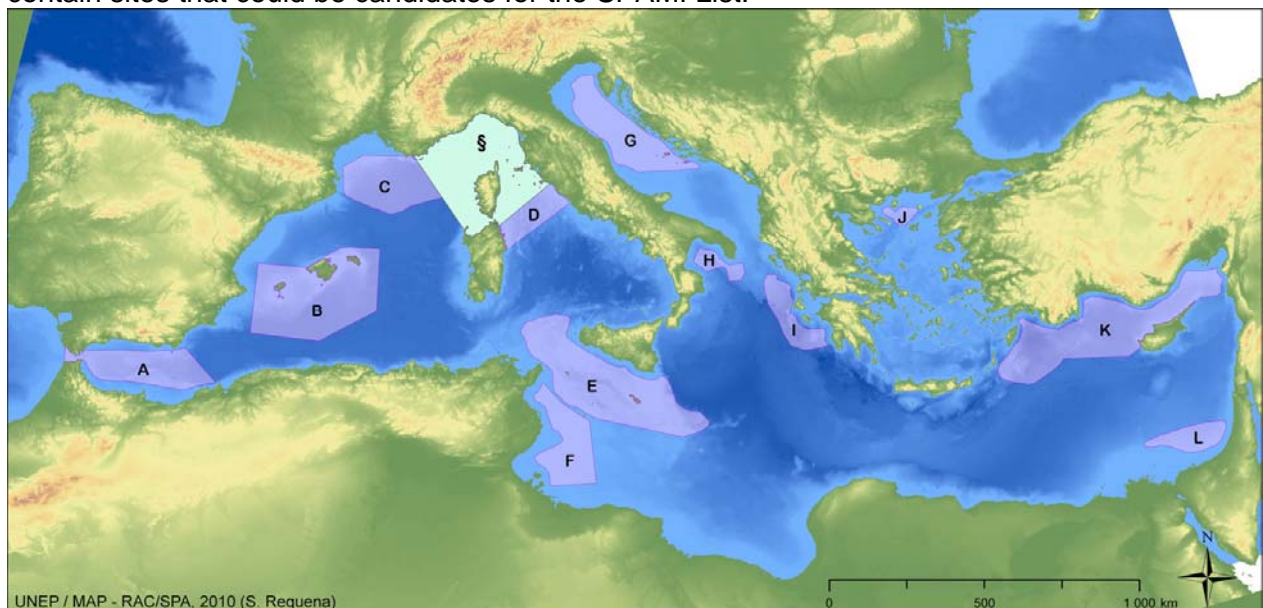
3.2 Reminder of the first phase's activities and results

The first phase was completed in 2009 and included an assessment based on the available scientific knowledge to identify priority conservation areas in the open seas, including the deep seas, likely to contain sites that could be candidates for the SPAMI List.

The identification of the areas was conducted through different studies taking into consideration the geological features of the seabed (seamounts, mud volcanoes, dries, canyons, hydrothermal vents), oceanographic features (fronts, upwelling), ecological features of certain habitats (coralligenous facies, white coral communities) and biogeographic features of certain species.

During the Extraordinary Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points, held on the 1st June 2010 in Istanbul (Turkey), a list of priority conservation areas located in the open seas, including the deep seas, was revised and 12 priority conservation areas were retained (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Priority conservation areas in the open seas, including the deep seas, likely to contain sites that could be candidates for the SPAMI List.



A: Alborán Seamounts; B: Southern Balearic; C: Gulf of Lions shelf and slope; D: Central Tyrrhenian; E: Northern Strait of Sicily (including Adventure and nearby banks); F: Southern Strait of Sicily; G: Northern and Central Adriatic; H: Santa Maria di Leuca; I: North-eastern Ionian; J: Thracian Sea; K: North-eastern Levantine Sea and Rhodes Gyre; L: Nile Delta Region (§: Pelagos Sanctuary declared as SPAMI in 2001)

3.3 Second phase's objective and activities

The Project's second phase begins in 2010 and aims to facilitate the process of designating as SPAMIs sites included in the areas identified as priority for conservation interest during the first phase.

At Article 9, the SPA/BD Protocol provides that proposals for the SPAMI List may be submitted by two or more neighbouring Parties if the area is situated, partly or wholly, on the high sea or in areas where the limits of national sovereignty or jurisdiction have not yet been defined.

In these cases, the neighbouring Parties shall then consult each other with a view to ensuring the consistency of the proposed protection and management measures, as well as the means for their implementation.

Furthermore, the Parties that are making the proposal for the SPAMI List provide the RAC/SPA with a presentation report containing information on the area's geographic location, its physical and ecological features, its legal status, its management plan and the means of implementing this, and a statement justifying the area's Mediterranean importance.

The activities of the Project's second phase aim at accompanying the area's neighbouring Parties concerned in a process of consultation and coordination. Thus, for each site considered, it was proposed during the Istanbul meeting to set up *ad hoc* working groups, constituted by representatives of the countries neighbouring on the concerned area, in order to support the sub-regional consultation processes.

The operational aims of this work group would be:

- ensuring coordination and follow-up of the activities to be carried on between the concerned Parties on a suitable scale, to attain the overall aim of preparing a presentation report
- facilitating the national consultation process that must be done at country scale, by circulating information at the level of the Focal Point or his/her representative on how the process is advancing
- initiating sustainable consultation dynamics between the neighbouring Parties concerned; the dynamics must continue after the project is over, especially as regards implementing the measures to manage the area
- developing a pilot experience in the Mediterranean that can be replicated in other priority conservation areas that lie in the open seas and were identified during the first phase of the initiative.

3.4 State of progress since June 2010

a) Official contact with national authorities

The Istanbul meeting recommended that *“for each site chosen, the Secretariat should officially contact the authorities of the countries concerned through the appropriate diplomatic channels. This step being essential to initiate the process of SPAMI creation in areas embracing high seas and would serve to sensitize decision makers and competent national institutions concerning the activities developed under this project.”*

Thus the MAP Coordinating Unit sent in June 2010 official letters to the concerned countries' authorities inviting them to express their interest to consider the preparation of SPAMI proposals for the priority conservation areas identified in the Mediterranean open seas.

Some answers were received from countries requesting further information on the process or requesting the revision of the list of the priority conservation areas.

Other countries, without having answered in an explicit way, showed interest to work jointly, as announced during the Istanbul meeting.

b) Consultation meetings

On the basis of the declarations made by some countries' representatives during the Istanbul meeting, the MAP-RAC/SPA organized the first consultation meetings with those concerned countries:

- the consultation meeting for the neighbouring countries of the Alboran Sea area was organized with representatives of Algeria, Morocco and Spain on the 15th and 16th March 2011,
- the consultation meeting for the neighbouring countries of the Gulf of Lions area was organized with representatives of France and Spain on the 17th and 18th March 2011.

Both meetings were held in the premises of the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, in Malaga, Spain. The Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan was represented and RAC/SPA acted as the Secretariat for the Meeting.

The main objective of these meetings was to present the proposed methodology and to discuss with the representatives of the concerned countries the feasibility of setting up sub-regional working groups to support a consultation process.

These meetings were an opportunity for the representatives of the countries to meet and to exchange on the issue. The countries' representatives presented the organization of their national administration, as well as their national projects and initiatives which contribute to improve environmental and scientific knowledge on both areas.

For each country, it was indicated that they are many stakeholders, involving several departments and ministries at the central level of the States (such as the Ministries in charge of environment, fisheries, and foreign affairs).

In this framework, the discussions of both meetings highlighted the necessity to consult at the national level the different departments concerned. So, before beginning sub-regional working group processes, it was stated that it is important for the countries to set up national consultation processes involving the different technical departments concerned by the issue.

Considering the declaration made by the Slovenian representative during the Istanbul meeting, inviting the countries bordering the Adriatic to take advantage of a workshop on representative MPA network in the Adriatic to progress towards coordinated measures for establishing a SPAMI in this high seas region, RAC/SPA attempted to organize a consultation meeting for the Adriatic countries on 2010, but the meeting was postponed to 2011.

RAC/SPA will take the opportunity of the Tenth Meeting of the Focal Points for SPAs to discuss with the Focal Points of the Adriatic countries the possibility to organize a consultation meeting for the Adriatic area in June 2011, or beginning of July 2011.

c) Preparation of an approach for establishing and managing SPAMIs beyond national jurisdiction

In parallel with the work for facilitating the sub-regional consultation processes, RAC/SPA worked on the preparation of an approach for establishing and managing SPAMIs beyond national jurisdiction, as requested by the Bureau of the Contracting Parties during its meeting held on the 5th and the 6th May 2010.

As stated in the report of the Meeting (UNEP/BUR/70/5): *"In particular, the Bureau addressed ways and means for elaborating a sound legal and institutional approach for establishing SPAMIs in areas beyond national jurisdiction for further discussion by the Bureau and SPA/RAC Focal Points. This approach would help creating a clear vision with regard to SPAMI management and the need to enhance cooperation with other component international organizations for this purpose, in line with MAP Programme of work and Marrakesh Declaration."*

A working group meeting with experts from international organizations and Mediterranean independent experts was convened upon MAP Coordinating Unit's initiative in Athens, on the 3rd and the 4th March 2011, to discuss and elaborate this approach.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the following international and regional organizations: Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the United Nations (UN DOALOS), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN FAO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), Secretariat of the General

Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), Secretariat of the OSPAR Convention, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), WWF Mediterranean Programme (WWF-MedPO), Greenpeace, *Institut du Développement Durable et des Relations Internationales* (IDDRI), as well as by independent experts.

The Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan was also represented. RAC/SPA acted as the Secretariat for the Meeting.

Taking into account the recommendations of this meeting, the approach document will be presented to the RAC/SPA Focal Points during their Tenth Meeting (Document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/6).

This approach aims to provide indications and suggestions to facilitate proposals for inclusion in the SPAMI List for areas situated, partly or wholly, on the high seas, or in areas where the limits of national sovereignty or jurisdiction have not yet been defined. It also includes elements on the management of SPAMIs beyond national jurisdiction, in accordance with the relevant international legal framework.

The legal aspects of the issues considered in the approach are detailed in the report "Note on the establishment of marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction in the Mediterranean Sea" presented as an information document to the approach proposal (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/Inf.3).

3.5 Planned activities until December 2011

As agreed between the European Commission and the MAP Coordinating Unit, the project will end in December 2011.

Until this date, RAC/SPA will implement activities to support the sub-regional consultation processes that were initiated in March 2011 for the Alboran Sea and the Gulf of Lions areas.

In particular, as discussed with the concerned countries during the first consultation meetings, RAC/SPA, in consultation with them, will hire experts to collect and to compile the available data on the Alboran Sea and Gulf of Lions areas. This activity will contribute to establish states of knowledge on the concerned areas.

RAC/SPA will hire legal experts to list the different international, regional and national regulations in force in the concerned areas, in consultation with the concerned countries.

In addition, if during the Tenth Meeting of the Focal Points for SPAs the representatives of the Adriatic countries agree to organize the consultation meeting for the Adriatic area in June 2011, or beginning of July 2011, the opportunity to conduct some oceanographic surveys in this area during the autumn will be examined.

Lastly, a meeting of the Project Steering Committee is planned at the end of the project, in November 2011, to discuss the implementation of the project and to provide guidance for the next steps.

3.6 Next biennium

As stated in the RAC/SPA draft programme of work for 2012-2013 (UNEP(DEPI)/MEDWG.359/14), funds would be mobilized through external funding to

pursue these priority activities, in line with the five-years MAP programme of work 2010-2014. In this regard, the SPA Focal Points will be asked to inform the meeting on eventual sources of funding.