

Statement to the Ministers at COP22 of the Barcelona Convention

(Antalya, 9 December 2021)

**on behalf of the Mediterranean Information Office for
Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE),
the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)
and their membership
as well as other MAP Partners
delivered by Dr. Emad Adly**

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Honorable Guests,

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to address the 22nd Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. RAED and MIO-ECSDE, gathering more than 350 member organizations, have been MAP partners for more than 30 years. Some of these members, e.g. eco-union, ECAT, HEAD, Legambiente, MEDASSET, PWLS and many others, are also MAP Partners, and contributed to the drafting of this Statement, even if most of them are not present. It is a pity that remote connection and inclusion of so many MAP Partners, that could not travel due to the on-going pandemic, was not made possible. The vast majority of these NGOs contribute to the transposition of the outcomes of this decision-making body to the national level. So, they are valuable allies for the implementation of the objectives of the Convention. A truly powerful force, when one thinks of the millions of citizens that these NGOs collectively reach out to, also for building back a greener, inclusive and gender-responsive recovery, following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But it is also a force to reckon with.

In a context of climate and biodiversity emergency at global and Mediterranean level in particular, progress is not at the pace expected by civil society and the society as a whole. The title of this Ministerial Session “Towards a Blue Mediterranean: Leaving a Pollution-Free Legacy, Protecting Biodiversity and Sustaining Climate Stability” is a profound one that raises expectations.

Allow me to convey to you that there is no longer room for further disappointment. Hope needs to become evident. Countries and institutions need to step up, use the existing knowledge and tools (soft and hard), reform their institutions and services, mobilize the available considerable funds not yet accessed, and accelerate the transition that is extremely slow and late in coming.

This requires higher political commitment, and full involvement and support from the public. This can be obtained through accession to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and enhanced awareness and education

by implementing the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan.

More specifically, we call upon you to:

- 1.** Increase the ambition of the Contracting Parties so that the Mediterranean region, one of the most vulnerable and affected regions by climate change and biodiversity losses, becomes a global leader in stopping biodiversity losses by 2030 and in the ecological transition to climate-neutrality by 2050. Effective protection to conserve at least 30 per cent of the Mediterranean Sea by 2030, should be achieved.
- 2.** Develop operational coordination and cooperation mechanisms with major regional and global environmental agreements, such as the Paris Agreement or the Convention on Biological Diversity, to implement them in the riparian countries in the shortest time capitalizing also on the Barcelona Convention mechanisms.
- 3.** Follow-up on the submission to the IMO MEPC 78 to designate the Mediterranean Sea an emission control area for Sulphur (SECA) with full entry into force on time (we would have preferred the earlier date!). To maximize achievable health benefits for Mediterranean citizens we also call for the designation of an emission control area for nitrogen oxide emissions (NECA) as well, with full entry into force by 2025.
- 4.** Enhance the implementation, visibility, and impact of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-205, to take full benefits of its achievements and address its shortcomings, following the recommendations of the mid-term assessment of the MSSD.
- 5.** Ensure open, reliable and easy access to national data and information provided by Contracting Parties in the framework of the Barcelona Convention, to facilitate monitoring, participation and scrutiny by civil society, academia and external observers.
- 6.** Recognize the role and capitalize on the efforts of NGOs and CSOs and provide technical and financial means, in particular for those from the South, to guarantee adequate and fair participation in the policy and decision-making processes related to the Barcelona Convention.

We are deeply concerned about the environmental implications of deep-sea mining and off-shore oil and gas extraction in the Mediterranean Sea, given the potential irreversible effects on fragile and vulnerable marine ecosystems and the contradiction to global efforts towards climate-neutrality by 2050.

We reaffirm our commitment and readiness to work with you in the upcoming biennium one of the most critical for the future of the environment and prosperity of our region.