



Statement to the Ministers at COP23 of the Barcelona Convention

“Green transition in the Mediterranean: From decisions to actions”

**on behalf of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment,
Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE),
its member NGOs and other MAP Partners**

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies & Gentlemen,

We sincerely value the opportunity to address the 23rd Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. MIO-ECSDE together with its 134 member organizations, from 28 countries, has been a MAP Partner since the very beginning and has been working for 32 years now for the protection of the Mediterranean coastal and marine environment and for promoting sustainable development in a peaceful Mediterranean region.

Jointly with our member organisations (AOYE, CIDCE, DPPVN, ECO-UNION, EKO-KVARNER, MAREVIVO, MEDASSET, MOHAMMED VI FOUNDATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, RAED) and other MAP Partners (ACG, AREBI, GWP-Med) present, we have prepared this Statement.

Our member organisations are a powerful and willing workforce for the ‘green transition’ that is so urgently needed in our Mediterranean. The theme of the present meeting, “from decisions to actions” can only be realized through close collaboration between civil society and Contracting Parties at all levels, as social actors are crucial in the transposition of the decisions of COP23 to the national and local levels. In this regard we advocate for meaningful involvement and empowerment of the NGO and civil society sector, both in terms of funding and support, and we stress the importance of engaging NGOs and non-state actors in the decision-making, implementation, and monitoring processes.

For creating the enabling conditions to achieve that, countries should commit to the principles of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, all of which are pillars of the Aarhus Convention. Since November 2023, a Mediterranean Accession Agenda to the Aarhus Convention (MAAAC) is in place, supported by the EU WES project. We urge you to employ it and enable open access for partners and observers to reporting documents.

We are pleased to see that the Declaration recognizes the important role of Education for Sustainable Development. Countries should utilize the Action Plan towards 2030 of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and mobilize the necessary funds and mechanisms, as education and awareness raising are the most efficient and cost-effective means in addressing the challenges of our time and for accelerating behavioral changes and solidifying collective and individual commitment towards the protection of our natural and cultural heritage.

We commend your commitment to ensuring that, by 2030, at least 30% of coastal and marine areas are effectively conserved and managed. This represents a concrete contribution of the Mediterranean region to the achievement of Target 3 of the CBD, the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF). We call upon you to adopt ambitious restoration targets and undertake all necessary actions to achieve them.

The recognition of the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) nexus approach in the Declaration is a very positive step for the promotion of integrated management of water resources, connected to the newly approved decision on agriculture and stormwater and protection/restoration of ecosystems. In this context, the relevant Flagship Initiative will ensure accelerated efforts in this domain, starting with the drafting of a Strategic Framework for the promotion of the WEFE nexus in the Mediterranean source to sea continuum, which we hope to see adopted in early 2025.



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We are pleased to note the commitment expressed in the Declaration for maritime decarbonization and emissions control. We intend to contribute in a concrete manner through the METAVASEA 5-year project entitled 'People-Centered Transition for Maritime Decarbonization in the East Mediterranean', led by HELMEPA and supported by the Lloyd's Register Foundation.

We aspire to see a carefully revised Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-2025, that will be supported and taken up by all Parties in terms of commitments and resources.

We reaffirm our commitment and readiness to work with you in the upcoming biennium. MIO-ECSDE and its membership are ready to do their share and also bring in its other four important networks of key stakeholders, namely the network of more than 6500 educators (MEDIES), the network of more than 90 Parliamentarians (COMPSUD), the network of more than 100 journalists (COMJESD) and the network of 20 universities (MedUnNet), as well as the networks of national initiatives such as the network of National Fora on Sustainable Development coordinated by RAED in five south Mediterranean countries, for example.

As one of the trusted key regional players, having concretely demonstrated our commitment to collective Mediterranean efforts on the science-policy-society interface to address the negative trends that affect the region, we continue our actions on the ground, via a number of initiatives such as the EU-funded WES project and its extension phase till 2028, the Interreg Euro-MED Innovative Sustainable Economy Mission, the Plastic Busters Initiative, a series of Horizon Europe projects, the METAVASEA project, the EU YOUTHCARE project, and the proposed flagship initiatives such as the Blue Tourism and Posidonia Protection (supported by our member NGOs), the project titled 'Measuring the effectivity of environmental law', just to name a few...

We, along with the millions of citizens collectively reached by our NGO members, networks, and collaborating organizations, look to the next biennium with confidence and optimism despite major difficulties. We invite you to do the same, particularly in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the Barcelona Convention, for which we hold high expectations.