

CONCEPT NOTE

Mediterranean Stakeholder Forum on Environment and Climate Action “Making the behavioural shift happen”

NGOs/CSOs, Parliamentarians, Journalists, Women and Youth organisations
and other actors meet in Cairo

21-23 October 2025

Main Venue: [Triumph Plaza Hotel](#), Cairo, Egypt

Introduction

This forum is taking place at a moment where unforeseen difficulties and challenges affecting the environment and sustainable development of the Mediterranean and the globe, are very tangible for the entire society. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals seems beyond realistic, while peace, prosperity and access to a healthy environment are out of reach for millions in the region.

The Mediterranean is on the frontline of climate change. Rising temperatures and sea level, water scarcity, desertification, extreme weather events, and mounting pressure on ecosystems are threatening the wellbeing of increasingly more communities across the region.

While countries and Intergovernmental organisations are accelerating their efforts of transitioning to low-carbon economies that are more resilient to the adverse impacts of climate change and wide-ranging socio-economic consequences, new pressures keep emerging and progress is not happening fast enough.

Non-state actors, despite how challenging a time it is (shrinking civil space, limiting access to funding, etc.) are not waiting on the side-lines but are rather championing innovative advances in multiple fronts. The catalytic role of civil society in fostering a greater societal consensus to support the successful implementation of related national, regional and international policy has never been more acknowledged and appreciated. Awareness of climate change and environmental issues remains limited in the Southern Neighbourhood region, both among economic sectors and the general public, even though it is the second fastest warming region of our planet (after the Arctic), and includes some of the world's most vulnerable countries to climate impacts. Many perceive environmental protection, reversing biodiversity loss and climate action as secondary priorities compared to economic challenges, unemployment, and political unrest. This is especially true at this moment in time.

Despite all the challenges, the Mediterranean is a front-runner region the world over in climate adaptation solutions—where state-of-the art policies, integrated approaches, science-based shared knowledge, strong regional and sub-regional cooperation, awareness raising campaigns and educational programmes at all levels are driving meaningful change. And this forum will ride on this optimism and leverage what is needed to accelerate the much-needed shift toward sustainable behaviours (new vision – a new culture).

To accelerate impact and not miss climate targets by much, more is needed in an ever-shifting Mediterranean and global backdrop: elected officials need to be abreast of the science-based

facts, aware of cutting edge inclusive solutions and networked with other stakeholder groups; youth networks seek meaningful engagement in shaping policy that in turn ensures jobs and security, while being particularly effective in digital outreach and influencing the behaviour of their peers; responsive environment and climate policies, programmes and processes are still lagging and slow in the making; constructive, ethical and high-quality journalism that serves the public interest and builds trust requires skill building; research and academia needs to embrace a whole institute approach coming closer to legislators and policy makers but also the private sector and society at large; CSOs and NGOs must, among other things, be equipped to stimulate evidence-based adoption of appropriate behaviours and attitudes towards improved climate action and effective environmental protection.

Objectives of the Forum

The Mediterranean Stakeholder Forum on Environment and Climate Action takes note of the above and aims to support Mediterranean society (bottom-up and top-down) through the enhancement of the skills of civil society groups in advocating and better navigating through the increasingly complex landscape. The current reality may, on the one hand, hinder progress in the areas of environment, water, biodiversity, and climate action, but on the other, offers opportunities at multiple fronts. It aspires to help break down siloed governance approaches, consolidate and expand active Mediterranean Communities of Practice, bringing together diverse voices and areas of expertise in support of climate preparedness in the region.

Targeted participants: NGOs/CSOs, parliamentarians, journalists, women and youth organisations, research and academia, private sector associations and other actors

The Forum will enhance the capacity of the participating networks, organisations and practitioners to effectively engage with targeted communities and communicate environmental challenges such as pollution prevention, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, food security, energy efficiency (i.e., WEFE nexus), and other climate-related adverse impacts. Addressing these needs and providing realistic, evidence-based and fit-for-purpose solutions will help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of operations and remain on track for a sustainable development in the region.

Expected results of the forum:

- State of the art scientific and technical developments presented on climate-related challenges, pressures and advances in terms of solutions at hand;
- Strengthened capacities of participants to address key barriers in meeting their objectives;
- A more inclusive dialogue with wide stakeholder participation enabling voices and messages to be heard;
- Showcased practical experiences, examples and tools (e.g., WEFE Nexus approach, coastal planning (ICZM), pollution prevention) linked to real-life priorities like health, water security, jobs, energy and food security;
- Strengthened connections across communities of practice, with emphasis on youth and women's groups (less fragmentation, better coordination and therefore access to funding, shared outreach actions);

- A refreshed narrative for the region and better equipped participants to effectively communicate it;
- Outcomes of the Forum considered and even embedded within long-term planning and strategies affecting the region.

Summary Outcome Document

A set of recommendations/messages will be formulated and agreed so that a common Mediterranean vision and narrative informs key policy processes, such as:

- COP24 of the Barcelona Convention (December 2025)
- UNEA-7 (December 2025)
- EU/UfM/LAS High-Level Events, e.g., Revamped UfM 2030GreenerMed Agenda, Ministerial for the New Pact for the Mediterranean (tbd), Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Water, Arab Committee for Sustainable Development – League of Arab States, UfM Ministerial on Water Security (2026), etc.
- the Mediterranean Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (MCESD)
- MedProgramme final Annual Stocktaking Meeting (2026)

The forum is fully aligned and has established partnerships with regional institutions such as the UNEP/MAP and the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD), the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Mediterranean Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (MCESD) and the League of Arab States (LAS).

It should be noted that this is not a one-off event. The convening projects and partners are committed to further supporting the participating stakeholder networks (expert advice, capacity building, partnership and cross-fertilization opportunities,) and monitoring till 2027 the networks' activities, to enhance the impact of their work on climate and environmental / sustainable development awareness and education actions and 'people to people' outreach.

Annexes

Annex 1

Why the MedProgramme and WES-BCA Project joined forces in co-organizing the Mediterranean Stakeholder Forum on Environment and Climate Action - “Making the behavioural shift happen”

The **EU-funded WES BCA project** (see more under Annex 2) has a dedicated component on communication and outreach that aims to raise awareness of climate and environmental matters amongst the population, with a view to promote a better understanding of these matters but also active behavioural change. A communication and outreach strategy is under finalisation, and massive outreach and communication campaigns will be rolled out till 2027, targeting specific target groups. Regional networks of climate change/environmental champions will be activated and supported, promoting people-to-people outreach, and local CSOs/NGOs will also be mobilised. The Regional Forum was part of its work programme for its inception.

Meanwhile, the **GEF-funded MedProgramme** (see Annex 3) is a cornerstone for the desired transformation in the region. Implemented in ten Mediterranean countries, it brings together science, policy, and practice to reduce pollution, enhance biodiversity, and build climate resilience—from source to sea. One of its most innovative features is the promotion of the **WEFE Nexus**—an approach that recognizes the deep connections between **Water, Energy, Food, and Ecosystems** and their role in climate adaptation and sustainability. In fact, WES-BCA and the MedProgramme, together with PRIMA Med, supported the EU, UfM and UNEP/MAP in developing the draft Strategy Mediterranean WEFE Nexus Strategy.

Through the MedProgramme, countries like Montenegro, Lebanon, and Morocco have taken concrete steps toward integrated coastal zone management, cross-sectoral coordination, and national policy reform and the new regional Mediterranean WEFE Nexus Strategy is further helping to mainstream these lessons into long-term planning across the Mediterranean.

But technical progress alone is not enough. To ensure long-lasting impact, the MedProgramme must also inspire and mobilize broader societal engagement—from civil society organizations and women’s networks to journalists, youth, and parliamentarians. These actors play a vital role in shaping public opinion, advancing inclusive solutions, and holding institutions accountable. Partnering with the WES-BCA Project was therefore both timely and very meaningful, as joining forces will deliver a greater impact.

The WES-BCA project in a snapshot

The “Water and Environment Support-Biodiversity and Climate Action (WES-BCA) in the Neighbourhood South region” project aims to improve the protection of the environment, the restoration of biodiversity and the management of scarce water resources, while enhancing the resilience to climate change in the Mediterranean region, strengthening the formulation and enforcement of the relevant policies of the Partner Countries and the two regional political frameworks, namely the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Barcelona Convention.

- ❑ Partner Countries: eight (8) countries of North Africa and the Middle East
- ❑ Duration: November 2024 - November 2027
- ❑ Budget: 7.000.000 Euros
- ❑ Contracting Authority: European Commission, Directorate-General Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG-NEAR)

The **Implementing Consortium** includes leading European and regional entities with complementary skills and experience, namely: LDK CONSULTANTS S.A. (Leader), Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), Association of Cities and Regions for Sustainable Resource Management (ACR+), Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (CIHEAM Bari), Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), MedWaves, the Regional Activity Centre of UNEP/MAP for Sustainable Consumption and Production.

The project will build on the experience and achievements of its predecessor projects (WES, SWIM-H2020 SM, SWIM SM, Horizon 2020 CB/MEP) and provide continuity, further integrating new elements and institutional, scientific and technical developments. The “integration” concept will be coupled with regional exchanges of good practices and lessons learned (regional activities) and the adapted, more focused, continuation of the WES work at the national level (country-specific activities).

The project will be implemented through two complementary, closely related and mutually supportive Components: **Component I - focusing on Water, Biodiversity and Environment** and **Component II - focusing on Communication and Outreach with emphasis on Climate Action**.

Under Component I, the issues covered focus on:

- **Topic 1:** Prevention & Reduction of Pollution
- **Topic 2:** Curbing Plastic Pollution & Marine Litter
- **Topic 3:** Promoting the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus approach
- **Topic 4:** Promotion of water efficiency at all steps and levels of water management and use
- **Topic 5:** Climate Change mitigation and adaptation actions, including Water Scarcity and Biodiversity protection as priorities

Under Component II, the project aims to raise awareness and improve understanding by the general public (and specific segments of the population), including youth and women, stimulating adoption of appropriate behaviours and attitudes towards improved Climate Action and effective Environmental Protection.

The project **Implementation Team**, supported by the backstopping team, includes:

Team Leader: Professor Michael Scoulllos, scoulllos@wes-med.eu

Environment Expert: Mr Anis Ismail, a.ismail@wes-med.eu

Water Expert: Ms Suzan Taha, taha@wes-med.eu

Communication Expert: Ms Lisa Papadogeorgaki, lpa@ldk.gr

Stakeholder Engagement Expert: Dr Emad Adly, wes.gc@raednetwork.org

For more information: www.wes-bca.eu    



The Forum is hosted in Egypt by WES-BCA Consortium Member:

The Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)



Annex 3

SUMMARY: MEDITERRANEAN SEA PROGRAMME – ENHANCING ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY (MEDPROGRAMME)

OVERVIEW

The Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): “Enhancing Environmental Security” is a six (6) year (2020–2026) Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded multi-focal area and cross-sectoral initiative implemented in Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia, and Türkiye. UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) is the leading executing Agency; the GEF Implementing Agencies are UNEP and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the executing partners are UNESCO/IHP, European Investment Bank (EIB), IUCN Med, GWP-Med, WWF Med, University of Geneva-GRID Geneva, Plan Bleu, PAP/RAC, SCP/RAC, SPA/RAC and INFO/RAC. The MedProgramme operationalizes priority actions to reduce major transboundary environmental stresses in coastal areas while strengthening climate resilience and water security and improving the health and livelihoods of coastal populations. It also aims to promote sound environmental management that benefits women and men equally, through effective mainstreaming.

KEY COMPONENTS & OBJECTIVES

The MedProgramme is structured around four main objectives, implemented through 100+ coordinated actions in eight (+1) Child Projects across four GEF Focal Areas (International Waters, Biodiversity, Chemicals & Waste, Climate Change).

Component	Child Project	GEF Focal Area
1. Reduction of Land-Based Pollution in Priority Coastal Hotspots	CP 1.1: Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals & Wastes	International Waters (IW), Chemicals & Waste (CW)
	CP 1.2: Mediterranean Pollution Hotspots Investment Project	IW, CW
	CP 1.3: Mediterranean Sea Finance for Water Systems & Clean Coasts	IW, CW
2. Enhancing Sustainability & Climate Resilience in Coastal Zones	CP 2.1: Coastal Zones – Climate Resilience, Water Security & Habitat Protection	IW
	CP 2.2: Managing the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus	IW
	SCCF Project: Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in Mediterranean Marine & Coastal Areas	Climate Change (CC)
	FishEBM Med: Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean	IW Biodiversity
3. Protecting Marine Biodiversity	CP 3.1: Marine Protected Areas in Libya	Biodiversity (BD)
4. Knowledge Management & Programme Coordination	CP 4.1: Mediterranean Sea Basin Environmental & Climate Regional Support	IW, CW

KEY INNOVATIONS & APPROACHES

- Integrated Interventions: Addresses water management, pollution reduction, biodiversity conservation, fisheries management and climate change adaptation together.

- **Source-to-Sea Approach:** Considers land-based activities' impact on marine ecosystems across all involved spatial segments.
- **Support for Global Agreements:** Aligns with the Barcelona Convention, BRS Conventions, CBD Convention, UNFCCC Paris Agreement, SDGs (Goals 6, 13, 15), and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).
- **Financial Sustainability:** The Programme is funded with a USD \$43 million GEF grant and receives co-financing of USD \$550 million in the form of loans granted to the countries and to public/private actors to foster market creation and transformation and ensure sustainability through private sector and municipal involvement.

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

- GEF Lead Implementing Agency: UNEP
- Other GEF Implementing Agency: EBRD
- Leading Executing Agency: UNEP/MAP, FAO
- Key Executing Partners: UNESCO IHP, EIB, Plan Bleu, PAP/RAC, MedWaves, SPA/RAC, IUCN Med, WWF Med, GWP-Med, FAO-GFCM, Info/RAC, GRID Geneva, MIO-ECSDE

The MedProgramme is a pioneering initiative that fosters environmental security, innovation, and sustainability in the Mediterranean through regional cooperation, capacity building, and financing mechanisms.

EXPECTED RESULTS

Outcome 1: In coastal hot spots and catchment areas, measurable reduction of harmful chemicals and wastes (POPs, Mercury) and of excess nutrients impacting human health and coastal habitats, achieved

- Reduction and disposal 3,250 tons) of POPs
- Reduction and disposal of 50 tons of mercury
- In priority coastal hotspots: - At least 4 WWTP built or rehabilitated. - At least 150,000 m³/d of additional waste water treated to secondary level. - At least 20,000 m³/d of additional treated wastewater reused. - At least 20,000 m³/d of additional sludge digested. - Risk reduction in at least two coastal hotspots
- Common regional standards on waste water and sludge management and reuse, developed as an input for the deliberation of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

Outcome 2: Private/public investments enable pollution reduction in priority coastal and catchments areas through the improvement of water and waste water management systems and the introduction of modern and efficient technologies and practices

- At least 1.5 million m³ of water recycled per year in private/public systems
- At least three private/public wastewater systems discharging directly or indirectly into coastal hotspots upgraded
- At least 3.5 million m³ of additional wastewater treated per year in private/public systems

Outcome 3: Littoral countries enabled to identify trends and progress to impacts

- Updated baseline (TDA)
- Report on progress to impacts and on the achievement of relevant SDGs
- Definition of minimum 20 locations for offshore reference monitoring stations
- Data sharing regional policy prepared as an input for the deliberation of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention

Outcome 4: Coastal zone sustainability enhanced through the adoption of comprehensive national ICZM strategies, coastal plans and instruments, and the introduction of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) technical, regulatory, economic and market- oriented measures and improving equality of men and women.

- At least 12,500,000 hectares under improved management of landscapes and seascapes
- At least 3 countries implementing comprehensive ICZM and SCP approaches, including Coastal Zone Use-Capability mapping
- At least 300 persons, reflecting balanced representation of women and men, trained on integrated approaches, ICZM, MSP, and adaptation to climate variability and change

- At least 1,000 persons involved in awareness raising activities on coastal resilience and sustainability

Outcome 5: Coastal zone sustainability enhanced through the adoption of comprehensive national ICZM strategies, coastal plans and instruments, and the introduction of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) technical, regulatory, economic and market- oriented measures and improving equality.

- At least 5 priority coastal aquifers and related habitats under improved conjunctive surface and groundwater management
- At least 3 countries have initiated nation-wide dialogue on conjunctive surface and groundwater management solutions have been initiated
- Nine national inventories of submarine groundwater discharges (SGD)

Outcome 6: Balancing of competing water uses improved through water, food, energy and ecosystems integrated governance

- At least 3 priority coastal areas have developed Nexus assessments and have a Nexus Strategy/ Action Plan
- At least 1 transboundary basin/aquifer with enhanced cooperation framework
- At least 3 fiches of bankable projects for priority interventions and investments

Outcome 7: Expansion of seascapes under protection in Libya, and improved protected area management through the implementation of the Libyan Marine Protected Areas (MPA) National Strategy, mapping of marine key habitats, monitoring of marine megafauna (mammals, seabirds, turtles and cartilaginous fishes), capacity support mechanisms and adoption of permanent solutions

- At least 2,500 additional hectares of marine protected areas in Libya
- At least 1 MPA endowed with a management plan in Libya
- At least 1 MPA with developed strategies to strengthen the sustainability and effectiveness of the MPAs
- At least 2 sites covered by marine megafauna monitoring programmes
- At least 2 monitoring networks of marine key habitats
- At least 5 training sessions to Libyan nationals (reflecting balanced representation) on MPA networks planning and management, marine key habitats mapping, and marine megafauna monitoring

Some success stories:

<https://news.iwlearn.net/sourcetosea-integration-a-tale-of-two-nations?source=share-iwlearn>

<https://iwlearn.net/news/medprogramme-partners-unite-to-secure-mother-earths-precious-heritage>

<https://iwlearn.net/news/empowering-women-and-girls-for-a-sustainable-future>



European Bank
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**Mediterranean
Action Plan**
Barcelona
Convention