

Mediterranean Stakeholder Forum on Environment and Climate Action

“Making the behavioural shift happen”

NGOs/CSOs, parliamentarians, journalists, women's and youth organisations,
and other actors meet in Cairo

21-23 October 2025, Cairo, Egypt

FORUM OUTCOMES

Co-organised and co-financed by:

The “Water and Environment Support-Biodiversity and Climate Action (WES-BCA) in the Neighbourhood South region” project



WES-BCA
Water and Environment Support -
Biodiversity and Climate Action
in the Neighbourhood South region



Funded by
the European Union



The Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): “Enhancing Environmental Security”



European Bank
for Reconstruction and Development



Mediterranean
Action Plan
Barcelona
Convention

Hosted in Egypt by WES-BCA Consortium Member:



الشبكة العربية للبيئة والتنمية “رائد”
Arab Network for Environment
and Development “RAED”



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط



Mediterranean
Action Plan
Barcelona
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Contents

In a nutshell	3
Core messages from the Forum, as also communicated to COP24 of the Barcelona Convention on the 4th of December 2025.....	4
Participants' proposals clustered under Forum sessions	6
Advancing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to Drive Transformative Change at the Individual, Institutional, and Collective Levels.....	6
Untangling the Plastics Crisis: Responsibility, Complexity, and Science-Based Solutions	6
How Civil Society and Local Communities Can Drive Biodiversity Solutions.....	7
The Multifaceted Role of Parliamentarians and Local Authorities	8
How Traditional and New Media Can Shape Climate Behaviour	8
Applying Gender-Transformative Approaches in Mediterranean Civil Society Environmental and Climate Action.....	9
Youth specific Recommendations of the Mediterranean Stakeholder Forum on Environment and Climate Action	10
Recommendations specific to GEF and the EU in terms of follow-up on environment and climate action	12
Overall synthesis of Forum proposals	13

In a nutshell

The Forum was co-organised and co-financed by the EU-funded “Water and Environment Support-Biodiversity and Climate Action (WES-BCA) in the Neighbourhood South region” project and the GEF-funded Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): “Enhancing Environmental Security”, and hosted by the WES-BCA Consortium Member RAED (the Arab Network for Environment and Development). All major regional policy frameworks (the EU, the Union for the Mediterranean, the Mediterranean Action Plan of UNEP, and the League of Arab States) supported the Forum as did the Ministry of Environment of Egypt.

More than 170 stakeholders participated ranging from environmental, developmental and cultural NGOs/CSOs, to youth, women, parliamentarians, journalists, academics, educators, water specialists, progressive companies, local authorities, as well as some government officials and intergovernmental organisations.

The gender balance for those participating in person was excellent (close to 50%) at 45% male, 55% female, while approximately 23% of the participants were youth, who contributed to all panel discussions of the Forum. The satisfaction rate of the participants was 92% based on the completed evaluation form circulated at the end of the Forum and resent a few days later. Various participants contributed with their suggestions for an even better Forum to be organized in the near future.

Pooling together the targeted and carefully selected MedProgramme and WES-BCA stakeholders across 12 combined Partner Countries (Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Türkiye) complemented with experts and speakers from various additional countries (Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Serbia and Spain) (totaling 21 countries) made for a very interactive and productive forum.

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. These organisations and their membership constitute the most active and healthy part of our society, which repeatedly and in various ways in the different countries of the region, assist governments, working on advocacy, awareness raising, education on key issues such as climate change, filling gaps and inefficiencies of administrations, contributing to restoration of the environment, or monitoring pollution through participatory science, etc.

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.

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 behind and slow in the making; constructive, ethical and high-quality journalism that serves the public interest and builds trust requires inclusivity and skill building; research and academia needs to advance science, knowledge and innovation, 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 financially and institutionally supported and well equipped to stimulate evidence-based adoption of appropriate behaviours and attitudes towards improved climate action and effective environmental protection.

The Forum outcomes and recommendations, are to be disseminated to relevant Mediterranean policy frameworks and stakeholder networks, including the consultations on the Pact for the Mediterranean, the UNEP/MAP - Barcelona Convention system and the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), the Union for the Mediterranean, with the aim of informing ongoing dialogue, cooperation, and policy implementation across the region.

Core messages from the Forum, as also communicated to COP24 of the Barcelona Convention on the 4th of December 2025

More urgent interventions are needed, speeding up no-regret measures, inspired by good practices so as to resist fatalism and inertia.

Governments, despite the many and genuine efforts, good initiatives and some successes for many key issues, seem to be “running to catch up” despite evidence and knowledge, applied and replicable low-cost solutions, new technologies and digital tools, strategies and declarations. Why? Because of delay in strengthening governance structures, establishing robust institutions, that work together, in transparency, with accountability, hand in hand with civil society. The latter needs to in turn enhance its accountability, evidence-based contribution and effectiveness. Enhancing the role of NGOs/CSOs is not for them to replace governments, but to assist them, and introduce new generation governance.

Civil Society welcomes the commitment at regional and national level to implement highly integrated governance approaches, like the Strategy for Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (WEFE) Nexus in the Mediterranean Source-to-Sea Continuum as a guiding framework for regional and national action.

At the same time, civil society is discouraged by the resistance of some governments and economic sectors to take it all the way when it comes to effectively and efficiently addressing more complex challenges such as plastics pollution and maritime decarbonisation.

We want to show our determination for hope and we need Youth with us every step of the way. Youth, in turn, welcomes regional initiatives and efforts that focus on and engage Youth such as the UfM Youth Strategy, the initiative to expand the category of the Non-Contracting Party Members of the MCSD for including regional and sub-regional organizations of Youth (and Women) working in the field of

environment and sustainable development. Also, Youth expectations are high of the new Pact for the Mediterranean, where it is clearly mentioned that special attention should be paid to empowering and constructively engaging with Youth.

There are major challenges for civil society, connected to the shrinking civic space the world over, with corresponding limited access to financial resources that are needed to enable NGOs/CSOs to remain at the forefront of innovation and effective and efficient partners.

We share the responsibility of achieving resilience to our respective stakeholder base. We need to see the success at regional level reaching and affecting people and nature at the national and local levels. We need to see coherent legal frameworks that will provide incentives and the enabling environment for sustainability. And the sustainable financing of implementation.

Participants' proposals clustered under Forum sessions

Advancing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to Drive Transformative Change at the Individual, Institutional, and Collective Levels

"ESD is instrumental in achieving all SDGs, with key contributions from governments but also stakeholder groups, such as youth, women, educators, media, policymakers and local authorities."

- Integrate sustainability as a core principle rather than an add-on in educational institutes, including universities, highlighting the importance of structural coherence and participatory culture to drive transformative change.
- Particularly for tertiary education institutes: call for action to shift from teaching sustainability to embodying it in practice, with a focus on youth empowerment and open science.
- In terms of the Mediterranean Committee of ESD (MCESD): enhance support within countries in making governments more active regarding the Mediterranean Strategy on ESD and its Action Plan – as the common framework for transformative change - also through awareness raising in parliaments.
- Consider the Pact for the Mediterranean as an excellent occasion and context for the support of the MCESD work.
- Emphasize the importance of education in empowering youth for sustainable development in the region; in fostering collaboration, behavioral change, and environmental awareness across the Mediterranean.
- Design and implement jointly, formal, non-formal and informal ESD projects on climate change and other issues of importance for the Mediterranean.
- Support and capitalize on regional awareness campaigns such as the WES-BCA's 'Our Climate – Our Community'.

Untangling the Plastics Crisis: Responsibility, Complexity, and Science-Based Solutions

- *Adopt a coordinated, source-to-sea approach:* The entry of plastic litter into the marine environment occurs through a multitude of point and diffuse sources, originating from both land-based and ocean-based sources. Rivers constitute a significant pathway for marine litter, contributing to the proliferation of plastics in coastal and marine environments. This underscores the need for a coordinated and holistic approach to tackle marine plastic pollution at its source, making the source-to-sea approach key to effective action.
- *Strengthen scientific understanding and accessibility of knowledge:* To effectively address marine plastic pollution, a thorough and comprehensive understanding of all aspects of plastics is essential, including their composition, degradation mechanisms, and recycling feasibility. Sound scientific and up-to-date knowledge is not readily available or accessible to all stakeholders, often resulting in misconceptions and 'false' solutions. Empowering stakeholders with insights into the diverse dimensions of plastics makes them pivotal agents in driving viable solutions for marine litter.
- *Scale up pilot projects and leverage collective learning:* Numerous pilot projects for marine litter prevention and mitigation have been conducted in the Mediterranean. The challenge now is to scale up these pilot actions and experiences to regional and national levels. Within this context, leveraging

collective learning is essential, while also recognizing and addressing local specificities to ensure effective solutions.

- *Promote science-based awareness and education:* Targeted and science-based awareness-raising campaigns and educational activities represent essential measures to engage a diverse audience in propelling the paradigm shift needed in the way we design, produce, and consume. This will support the transition from throwaway societies toward litter-free coasts and seas.
- *Encourage responsible behaviour and social innovation:* Promoting responsible behaviours of all societal actors and enhancing overall accountability are crucial in addressing marine litter. Furthermore, prioritizing the accessibility and affordability of marine litter solutions within inclusive and just societies is paramount. In this context, social innovations related to how we produce, distribute, and consume products should be regarded as a pivotal approach to moving from the linear production and use of plastics to a circular one.

How Civil Society and Local Communities Can Drive Biodiversity Solutions

- *Empower community-based action for biodiversity protection and restoration:*
 - Recognize and finance CSOs, local cooperatives, and community groups as active partners in national restoration efforts, especially in coastal and rural zones.
 - Support co-management of protected areas and other conservation sites, building on successful Mediterranean experiences and similar networks.
 - Scale up nature-based solutions that create inclusive income opportunities—such as sustainable fisheries, eco-tourism, and land restoration—while maintaining ecological integrity.
- *Use UNESCO Biosphere Reserves as living laboratories for sustainability:*
 - Strengthen and expand Mediterranean Biosphere Reserves as ideal spaces for integrating conservation, education, and sustainable livelihoods.
 - Promote them as demonstration areas for values-based learning, citizen science, and dialogue between science, policy, and local communities.
- *Translate global targets into realistic local measures:*
 - Adapt the 30x30 and EU Restoration targets to Mediterranean realities—fragile ecosystems, high population density, and socio-economic pressures—through participatory and inclusive local planning.
 - Ensure Nature-Based Solution Action Plans (NBSAPs) and restoration plans are developed with inclusive consultation processes involving NGOs, youth, women, media and local authorities.
- *Invest in communication, education, and behavior change:*
 - Launch coordinated inclusive regional awareness campaigns connecting biodiversity to daily life—water, food, health, and jobs—to overcome the perception of biodiversity as an abstract concept, or as a water ‘consumer’.
 - Integrate biodiversity values into formal education systems and informal learning, using culture and heritage to foster emotional connections with nature.

The Multifaceted Role of Parliamentarians and Local Authorities

- Prioritize urgent cross-border environmental issues in parliamentary discussions and regional cooperation.
- Support legal and administrative reforms granting municipalities financial and administrative autonomy to implement environmental and climate policies tailored to local needs. Local authorities should be recognized as key partners in achieving national and regional sustainability objectives.
- Facilitate structured collaboration between parliamentarians, local authorities, civil society, and youth to co-develop and implement environmental initiatives including the promotion of the Aarhus Convention, a global instrument on environmental democracy that acknowledges that effective climate action requires government accountability, public participation, and protected civic space.
- Encourage MPs to maintain close links with their constituencies, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, ensuring that policies and projects reflect local realities and community needs.
- Promote platforms, such as the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD), to facilitate the exchange and dissemination of best practices, innovative policies, and successful interventions in environmental management, climate adaptation, agriculture, water management, and urban sustainability among parliaments.
- Recognize journalists and media professionals as key partners in better formulating key environmental information and messages, and in conveying environmental and sustainability policies to the public.
- Establish mechanisms to incorporate women and youth recommendations into policy-making and provide clear follow-up on their implementation.

How Traditional and New Media Can Shape Climate Behaviour

- Adapt messages to local realities. Climate communication must be rooted in the cultural, linguistic, and social contexts of each community. Global narratives and abstract targets should be translated into stories that reflect everyday life and local priorities.
- Speak people's language — literally and culturally. Use local expressions, imagery, and references that make climate change tangible. Link it to issues that matter most — water, food, jobs, health, or heritage — rather than distant global metrics.
- Shift from top-down messaging to dialogue. Communication should not take the form of lecture but rather be engaging. Create spaces for listening, co-creation, and feedback, ensuring people feel heard and involved in shaping solutions.
- Empower trusted community voices. Messages resonate most when delivered by people audiences already trust — such as local leaders, teachers, farmers, youth and local women groups, or community organizations — rather than by institutions or theoreticians.
- Show practical, adoptable solutions. Focus on what individuals and communities can do. Highlight relatable examples of action and success, rather than abstract calls for behavioral change.
- Nurture and support environmental journalism. The growing number and quality of environmental reporters in the region should be reinforced through sustained training, mentorship, and access to credible data and expert networks.
- Invest in the next generation of communicators. Success stories show the value of mentoring young journalists and content creators who can translate complex science into accessible and inspiring narratives.

- Leverage social media responsibly. Engage influencers and digital storytellers to reach youth and women audiences — but ensure that credibility, accuracy, and transparency remain central. Trust is more valuable than virality.
- Promote collaboration across sectors. Strong partnerships between journalists, NGOs, researchers, and educators are essential. Each brings complementary skills — storytelling, community access, and evidence — that together can turn awareness into action. The results of such cooperation resonate with decision-makers too.
- Tell the Mediterranean’s climate story with both urgency and hope. Emphasize shared challenges but also shared solutions, reinforcing that communities across the region have the knowledge and creativity to act now for a livable future.
- Engage journalists and media organizations as active partners in projects and processes and not just to disseminate results. Explore the creation of a regional database of media specialists in environmental and sustainability issues and enhance partnerships among journalism training institutions and media outlets in the region.

Applying Gender-Transformative Approaches in Mediterranean Civil Society Environmental and Climate Action

- Recognize women not as victims but as active agents of change in climate action, ensuring their knowledge, leadership, and capacities are fully integrated into climate policies, adaptation, and mitigation efforts.
- Ensure that a coherent green transition is grounded in gender equality, including by adapting communication strategies to different target groups in ways that avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes.
- Integrate a systematic and gender-transformative perspective into all stages of environmental/climate action work, acknowledging the vital interdependence between environmental sustainability and social systems.
- Adopt a transformative and gender-responsive approach across sectors by empowering women through access to financial resources, capacity-building, and training on areas such as project development and management.
- Create a nexus between the National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by integrating a clear gender strategy, while simultaneously ensuring that the NAPs include a dedicated climate pillar addressing prevention, preparedness, and response.
- Designing and implementing capacity building activities for CSOs for the establishment of local women and youth mediator networks that would enable localizing the NAPs on WPS.
- Ensure the integration of gender-responsive approaches within the ‘Strategy for the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus in the Mediterranean Source to Sea continuum’ that will be endorsed at the upcoming UfM Ministerial Meeting on Water in 2026 and in its Roadmap.
- Ensure that climate and environmental interventions respond to women’s specific needs, promote gender equality across society, and enhance women’s participation in decision-making processes at all levels, moving beyond participation to ensure their substantive influence on policies, strategies, and actions at all levels
- Implement comprehensive, ground-level gender assessments/gender analysis to better understand existing inequalities and guide the design and application of gender-transformative strategies that are tailored to suit the local context, reporting back on priorities and gaps to ensure interventions are responsive and evidence-based.

- Strengthen legal frameworks that protect women on-site and ensure accountability and enforcement in cases of abuse or harassment. At the same time, implement awareness and capacity-building programmes for CSOs to address gender-based violence and the social norms that sustain it.
- Establish safe spaces for women in rural communities to collectively address social challenges while linking them to economic empowerment opportunities through the promotion of scalable, low-cost, Nature-Based Solutions (NBS).
- Create marketplaces and training platforms where women can develop income-generating skills and strengthen their economic independence.
- Localize agendas and projects by ensuring the meaningful inclusion of women from remote and geographically distant areas in related decision-making processes so that interventions are relevant, accessible, and effective in supporting their social and economic empowerment.
- Ensure safe and free mobility for women (and youth), enhancing protection and access to opportunities so they can actively engage in advocacy, including on climate and environment, at regional and international levels, and not only at the local or national level.
- CSOs working on environment and climate should adopt gender-responsive indicators and move beyond traditional measurement frameworks, ensuring that progress on gender equality and inclusion is effectively monitored and evaluated. Also develop and promote mobile applications for women to provide accessible information on environmental impacts of their work.
- Environmental NGOs lacking gender expertise should partner with organizations that have relevant experience. Collecting gender disaggregated data helps advocate for gender-responsive environmental and climate policies.
- IGOs, IFIs and governments should enhance their on-going efforts to mainstream gender equality both within their institutional operations and activities.

Youth specific Recommendations of the Mediterranean Stakeholder Forum on Environment and Climate Action

These recommendations addressed to decision-makers, international organisations and other actors with influence, summarize key Youth interventions made during Forum, as well as the outcomes of a dedicated self-organised Youth session and follow-up remote coordination post-event. More than 18 Youth from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, as well as Europe participated and contributed.

Governance and Education

- Recognize youth activism as a legitimate and essential component of environmental and climate related decision-making, ensuring young people are treated as partners in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and accountability.
- Ensure that regional climate and environmental mechanisms integrate mandatory youth representation quotas, accompanied by dedicated funding streams that allow youth delegates to meaningfully participate, travel, and follow-up on implementation.
- Support the establishment of a Mediterranean Youth Taskforce for Climate & Environment, formally linked to regional bodies such as UNEP-MAP and the MCSD, the UfM, or processes such as the Pact for the Mediterranean, connected to existing youth processes (Mediterranean Youth Group, EU Jeel Connectors, UfM Youth Delegates, Media Connect, etc.), to serve as a permanent mechanism, to ensure structured, continuous, and meaningful youth participation in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of Mediterranean environmental and climate policies.

- Promote the development of regional youth climate diplomacy programs to prepare young people for participation in international negotiations, regional dialogues, and cross-border environmental governance platforms.
- Ensure safe and free mobility for women and youth, enhancing protection and access to opportunities so they can actively engage in advocacy at regional and international levels, and not only at the local or national level.
- Acknowledge the importance of education in empowering youth for sustainable development in the region, in fostering collaboration, behavioral change, and environmental awareness across the Mediterranean.
- Enhance the implementation and resourcing of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan, as the common framework for transformative change, integrating ocean and climate literacy into formal and informal education systems of all levels, and supporting youth-led awareness and engagement initiatives across the region. Provide the needed competencies for Youth to translate complex science into accessible and inspiring narratives and in this way be effective in changing the behaviour of peers.
- Adopt equitable internship policy that enables youth - including those without prior experience - to access and gain practical experience in local and international environmental law, supported through inclusive outreach, simple application processes, transparent selection criteria, financial assistance, and hands-on exposure to real environmental legal processes at both local and global levels.

Climate/Biodiversity

- Accelerate the creation of - or the strengthening of existing - multi-stakeholder national committees (as required by the Paris Agreement), with the engagement of youth, to monitor NDC implementation, assess progress, and improve transparency and efficiency in climate action; similarly, for other global processes (CBD, UNCCD, etc.).
- Youth calls for:
 - the strengthening and operationalization of regional cooperation on coastal adaptation by building on the ICZM Protocol, the updated Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework (RCCAF) 2026–2035 (*adopted in December 2025*), and other regional and national strategies, while prioritizing vulnerable areas, such as Djerba and Kerkennah, through coordinated monitoring, early-warning systems, and climate-resilient infrastructure.
 - urgent restoration and protection of key biodiversity hotspots, coastal wetlands, and marine ecosystems.
 - equitable, inclusive access to renewable energy technologies, enhanced cross-border cooperation, and support for joint capacity-building efforts so all Mediterranean countries advance in the energy transition process.
 - promotion and operationalization of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) and Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) nexus approaches in the Mediterranean Source-to-Sea (S2S) continuum to enhance sector coordination, synergy and efficiency with benefits for future generations.

Circular Economy

- Adopt policy measures, including targeted grants, tax incentives, and internship programs, to support startups and youth-led initiatives in repair, upcycling, and circular design to shift the focus from waste management alone, to fostering circular thinking and enabling young innovators to build viable circular-economy enterprises.
- Encourage universities across the Mediterranean to establish youth-led circular innovation hubs that serve as living laboratories for testing solutions such as eco-design initiatives, composting

systems and repair spaces, with national and regional policies linking these hubs to green funding mechanisms to ensure sustained innovation beyond the academic setting.

- Develop a youth-centered regional “Zero Waste Mediterranean Challenge” that mobilizes cities and communities through friendly competition, supported by Mediterranean cooperation mechanisms to provide visibility, mentorship, and technical assistance to impactful youth-led models, while fostering a culture of shared responsibility and collaboration.
- Youth calls for strengthened regional coordination under the Basel and Barcelona Conventions to prevent illegal waste transfers, including end-of-life vessels, through improved port monitoring, cross-border cooperation, and stronger enforcement capacities.

Youth welcomes regional initiatives and efforts that focus on and engage Youth such as the UfM Youth Strategy, the initiative to expand the category of the Non-Contracting Party Members of the MCSD for including regional and sub-regional organizations of Youth (and Women) working in the field of environment and sustainable development. Also, Youth expectations are high of the new Pact for the Mediterranean, where it is clearly mentioned that special attention should be paid to empowering and constructively engaging with Youth.

Youth thanks the organisers of the Forum, looks forward to a similar follow-up event in two-years’ time and commits to remaining engaged and active in the meantime.

Recommendations specific to GEF and the EU in terms of follow-up on environment and climate action

- Increase awareness of EU, GEF and other financing and innovation opportunities, and ensure access to technical assistance, grants, and mobility programs to support innovations.
- Mobilize Sustainable Finance and oblige governments, IFIs, EU Delegations, implementing partners, etc. to actively involve civil society, youth, women and the media as partners, from the design phase (e.g. in Team Europe Initiatives and other EU-supported programs, in GEF-9) strengthening local ownership and visibility of community projects.
- Give priority to climate adaptation in the short and medium term, while maintaining strong mitigation efforts for long-term sustainability, investing in infrastructure that can withstand climate-related stresses like sea-level rise and extreme weather events.
- Commit to decreased fossil fuel dependency, inclusive renewable energy strategies within a WEFE approach, and cross-Mediterranean collaboration ensuring no country is left behind.
- Promote “water intelligence” echoing the Cairo Water Week 2025’s call for ethical, inclusive digital solutions to harness rapid technological change for sustainable development. The same can apply to other resource and sector management approaches.
- Empower local and community-based management models that foster the combination of traditional knowledge, new technologies and participatory planning tools.
- Develop a regional platform or repository (or consolidate existing fragmented ones) to document and share good practices across all areas of environmental sustainability, including water management, climate adaptation, agriculture, biodiversity, and food systems. The platform should include brief concept notes, case studies, and success stories to facilitate replication, innovation, and cross-country learning throughout the Mediterranean region.
- Specifically for journalists and media organizations, engage them as active partners in projects and programs to raise public awareness of sustainability initiatives. Efforts should include capacity building for media professionals in simplifying technical and scientific concepts for

broader audiences, and exploring the creation of a regional database of media specialists in environmental and sustainability issues.

- Enhance transparency and monitoring of national and local progress in environmental protection and climate action.
- Commit to turning global pledges into tangible change for people and ecosystems.

Behavioural change and transformational impact require systematic awareness raising, education, capacity building, inclusive governance at all levels, and sustained dialogue—bridging science, policy, society, and finance.

Overall synthesis of Forum proposals

Participants of the Mediterranean Stakeholder Forum underscored that achieving meaningful behavioural change on environment and climate requires systemic, inclusive, and science-based approaches that connect policy, society, and everyday life.

Several cross-cutting priorities consistently emerged: strengthening inclusive and participatory environmental governance; scaling up proven solutions, including nature-based and circular economy approaches; investing in education, science-based communication, and behavioural change; accelerating implementation of climate and biodiversity commitments; and reinforcing Mediterranean regional cooperation and knowledge exchange.

Across all thematic areas, participants highlighted the urgent need to strengthen governance frameworks, accelerate implementation, and move from commitments to action through transparent, accountable, and participatory processes. Civil society, youth, women, local authorities, parliamentarians, media, and academia were consistently identified as essential partners—not peripheral actors—in designing, implementing, and monitoring environmental and climate policies.

Education for Sustainable Development emerged as a foundational enabler of long-term transformation, calling for sustainability to be embedded institutionally and culturally across formal, non-formal, and informal education systems. Participants stressed the importance of empowering youth and strengthening regional frameworks such as the Mediterranean Strategy on ESD.

Addressing complex challenges such as plastic pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change impacts requires coordinated, science-based, integrated and source-to-sea approaches, combined with effective communication and social innovation. Scaling up proven solutions while adapting them to local contexts was emphasized as a priority.

Participants highlighted the need to translate global targets into realistic, locally owned actions through inclusive planning, community-based management, and nature-based solutions that deliver environmental, social, and economic benefits. UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and other participatory models were identified as key platforms for integration.

Gender equality and youth participation were identified as cross-cutting prerequisites for successful climate and environmental action. Participants called for gender-transformative

and youth-inclusive approaches that move beyond representation, toward meaningful influence, supported by access to finance, mobility, capacity-building, and institutionalized participation mechanisms. Youth contributions further demonstrated the importance of structured and sustained engagement mechanisms, offering concrete proposals related to governance, education, behavioural change, climate diplomacy, innovation, and circular economy solutions across the Mediterranean region.

Media and communication were recognized as critical drivers of behavioural change, requiring trusted voices, local narratives, ethical journalism, and collaboration across sectors to build public trust and counter misinformation.

Participants called on the EU, GEF, and other partners to prioritize climate adaptation, inclusive green transitions, sustainable finance, and transparency, while ensuring that global pledges translate into tangible improvements for Mediterranean communities and ecosystems.

Finally, participants expressed strong interest in maintaining the dialogue and partnerships initiated by the Forum, including through future regional stakeholder exchanges that can continue supporting collaboration, mutual learning, and joint action on Mediterranean environmental and climate priorities. Efforts are already underway to explore convening a follow-up regional Forum in 2027 to assess progress and sustain momentum.