

# The Parliamentarian's guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast

A handbook for members of parliaments serving in the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols



© 2024 United Nations Environment Programme

ISBN: 978-92-807-4115-5

Job number: DEP/2605/AT

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59117/20.500.11822/44577>

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part and in any form for educational or non-profit services without special permission from the copyright holder, provided acknowledgement of the source is made. The United Nations Environment Programme would appreciate receiving a copy of any publication that uses this publication as a source. No use of this publication may be made for resale or any other commercial purpose whatsoever without prior permission in writing from the United Nations Environment Programme. Applications for such permission, with a statement of the purpose and extent of the reproduction, should be addressed to [unep-communication-director@un.org](mailto:unep-communication-director@un.org).

#### Disclaimers

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNEP, UNEP/MAP or contributory organizations, concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city area or its authorities, or concerning delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Mention of a commercial company or product in this document does not imply endorsement by the United Nations Environment Programme or the authors. The use of information from this document for publicity or advertising is not permitted. Trademark names and symbols are used in an editorial fashion with no intention on infringement of trademark or copyright laws.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Environment Programme. We regret any errors or omissions that may have been unwittingly made.

© Maps, photos and illustrations as specified

**Suggested citation:** United Nations Environment Programme (2024) The Parliamentarian's guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast, Athens.  
<https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/44577>

**Production:** Athens

**URL:** [unep.org/resource page](https://unep.org/resource-page)

**Cover photo:** [Freepix.com](https://www.freepix.com) / Diana Grytsku

# Acknowledgements

This publication was produced under the supervision of Tatjana Hema, Coordinator of the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP), as part of the implementation of the Communication and Advocacy Programme of the Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2027 ([Decision IG.25/1](#)) and the Programme of Work for the 2022-2023 biennium ([Decision IG.25/19](#)).

This publication benefited from substantive contributions from the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), a member of the [Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development](#). PAM contributions included comments, input reflecting their subject-matter knowledge of parliamentary processes and the results of a survey undertaken among its Member States.



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN  
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE  
برلمان البحر الأبيض المتوسط

**Publication coordinator:** Jihed Ghannem, Public Information Officer, UNEP/MAP

**Legal advice:** Ihab Tarek Abdelazim Ahmed, Legal Officer, UNEP/MAP

**Substantive contributors** (in alphabetical order): Anastasia Vergiris (UNEP/MAP), Ihab Tarek Abdelazim Ahmed (UNEP/MAP), Jihed Ghannem (UNEP/MAP) and Marco Mura (PAM).

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of Helene Van Rossum (UNEP) and Marianna Bolshakova (UNEP) who reviewed this publication.

We wish to acknowledge the contributions of the members of the MAP Communication Taskforce on behalf of the Regional Activity Centres in which they serve.

The design, translation and promotion of this publication received financial support from the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security of Italy, under its Bilateral Cooperation Agreement with UNEP.

# List of acronyms and abbreviations

|                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Aarhus Convention</b>         | Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Barcelona Convention</b>      | Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (1976) amended as: Convention for the protection of the marine environment and the coastal region of the Mediterranean (1995)                                                                      |
| <b>BCRS</b>                      | Barcelona Convention Reporting System                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>COMPSUD</b>                   | Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>COP</b>                       | Meeting of Contracting Parties                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Dumping Protocol</b>          | Protocol for the prevention of pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by dumping from ships and aircraft (1976), amended as: Protocol for the prevention and elimination of pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by dumping from ships and aircraft or incineration at sea (1995) |
| <b>EIA</b>                       | Environmental Impact Assessment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Emergency Protocol</b>        | Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency (1976)                                                                                                                            |
| <b>GES</b>                       | Good Environmental Status                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>GLOBE</b>                     | Global Legislators Organisation for a Balanced Environment                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Hazardous Wastes Protocol</b> | Protocol on the Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (1996)                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>ICZM</b>                      | Integrated Coastal Zone Management                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>ICZM Protocol</b>             | Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in the Mediterranean (2008)                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>IMAP</b>                      | Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>INFO/RAC</b>                  | Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>InforMEA</b>                  | United Nations information portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>IPU</b>                       | Inter-Parliamentary Union                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>LBS</b>                       | Land-based Sources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>LBS Protocol</b>      | Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources (1980), amended as: Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (1996) |
| <b>MAP</b>               | Mediterranean Action Plan, 1975 / Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Sustainable Development of the Coastal Areas of the Mediterranean (MAP Phase II), 1995                                               |
| <b>MARPOL</b>            | International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>MCPA(s)</b>           | Marine and Coastal Protected Area(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>MCSO</b>              | Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>MEA(s)</b>            | Multilateral Environmental Agreement(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>MED POL</b>           | Mediterranean Pollution Assessment and Control Programme                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>MedECC</b>            | Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change [network]                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>MEDWAVES</b>          | Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>MEP(s)</b>            | Members of the European Parliament                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>MSSD</b>              | Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>OECM(s)</b>           | Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measure(s)                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Offshore Protocol</b> | Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution Resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf and the Seabed and its Subsoil (1994)                                                       |
| <b>PA OSCE</b>           | Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>PAM</b>               | Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>PAP/RAC</b>           | Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>PA-UfM</b>            | Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>PB/RAC</b>            | Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Post-2020 SAPBIO</b>  | Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region                                                                                   |

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Prevention and Emergency Protocol</b> | Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in Cases of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea (2002) |
| <b>REMPEC</b>                            | Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea                                                                      |
| <b>SDGs</b>                              | Sustainable Development Goals                                                                                                                      |
| <b>SoED</b>                              | State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean                                                                                      |
| <b>SPA Protocol</b>                      | Protocol concerning Mediterranean Specially Protected Areas (1982)                                                                                 |
| <b>SPA/BD</b>                            | Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity                                                                                                 |
| <b>SPA/BD Protocol</b>                   | Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (1995)                                                 |
| <b>SPA/RAC</b>                           | Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre                                                                                                 |
| <b>SPAMI(s)</b>                          | Specially Protected Area(s) of Mediterranean Importance                                                                                            |
| <b>SPAs</b>                              | Specially Protected Areas                                                                                                                          |
| <b>UN</b>                                | United Nations                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>UNDP</b>                              | United Nations Development Programme                                                                                                               |
| <b>UNEP</b>                              | United Nations Environment Programme                                                                                                               |
| <b>UNSDCF</b>                            | United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework                                                                                       |
| <b>UN Women</b>                          | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women                                                                             |

# Table of Contents

|                                          |     |
|------------------------------------------|-----|
| Acknowledgements .....                   | iii |
| List of acronyms and abbreviations ..... | iv  |
| Table of Contents .....                  | vii |
| Foreword .....                           | 1   |
| Introduction.....                        | 3   |
| Approach.....                            | 5   |

## **PART I. The Mediterranean Action Plan, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols: essential information for Mediterranean parliamentarians .....**

|                                                                                                           |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1. Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in brief .....</b>                                     | <b>7</b>  |
| Legally binding MEAs .....                                                                                | 7         |
| <b>2. The Barcelona Convention: the MEA dedicated to the Mediterranean Sea and coast .....</b>            | <b>9</b>  |
| 2.1 The institutional framework .....                                                                     | 9         |
| 2.2 The regulatory framework .....                                                                        | 10        |
| 2.3 The governing and subsidiary bodies .....                                                             | 11        |
| <b>3. Obligations and legally binding measures under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols .....</b> | <b>13</b> |
| 3.1 An illustrative sample of measures to implement the Barcelona Convention .....                        | 13        |
| 3.2 An illustrative sample of measures to implement the Protocols .....                                   | 13        |
| 3.3 An online system to report on measures taken at the national level.....                               | 13        |

## **PART II. Parliamentary action for healthy marine and coastal ecosystems that underpin sustainable development in the Mediterranean**

|                                                                                                                                                                   |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>i. Parliamentary action to strengthen the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols .....</b>                                               | <b>14</b> |
| <b>ii. A checklist for parliamentarians and their staff: .....</b>                                                                                                | <b>16</b> |
| 1. Acquire a better understanding of the scope and objectives of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols .....                                                 | 16        |
| 2. Consider how the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system encompasses the SDGs .....                                                                               | 16        |
| 3. Initiate or catalyze action to fill gaps in ratification .....                                                                                                 | 17        |
| 4. Recognize the ramifications of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in the parliamentary agenda .....                                                    | 18        |
| 5. Monitor and strengthen compliance and enforcement of existing legislation .....                                                                                | 20        |
| 5.1 Scrutinizing the mandatory implementation reports prepared and submitted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.....        | 20        |
| 5.2 Fostering interdepartmental coordination for more impactful action by the Executive .....                                                                     | 20        |
| 5.3 Mainstreaming obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in the Contracting Party's bilateral and international cooperation programmes..... | 20        |
| 6. Engage with constituents and support a whole-of-society approach to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols .....                                           | 22        |
| 7. Leverage networking by supporting international and regional parliamentary organizations .....                                                                 | 23        |
| <b>References .....</b>                                                                                                                                           | <b>26</b> |

### **Figures**

|                                                                                         |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 1: What are Multilateral Environmental Agreements? .....                         | 7  |
| Figure 2: Terminology essentials - An important distinction .....                       | 9  |
| Figure 3: Vision of the Medium -Term Strategy of UNEP/MAP .....                         | 9  |
| Figure 4: Terminology essentials - The Secretariat .....                                | 11 |
| Figure 5: Terminology essentials - Compliance and enforcement.....                      | 11 |
| Figure 6: The Compliance Committee .....                                                | 11 |
| Figure 7: Terminology essentials - Gender-Responsive Budgeting.....                     | 15 |
| Figure 8: Time-bound targets for the Mediterranean .....                                | 15 |
| Figure 9: Status of ratification of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols .....    | 17 |
| Figure 10: Barcelona Convention, Article 15 - Public information and participation..... | 22 |

### **Tables**

|                                                                                                                                                 |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 1: Parliamentary agenda themes and relevant obligations under the Barcelona Convention.....                                               | 18 |
| Table 2: Suggestions for parliamentary action regarding mandatory reporting obligations under the Barcelona Convention .....                    | 21 |
| Table 3: Examples from Mediterranean parliaments taking action to advance the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols..... | 25 |

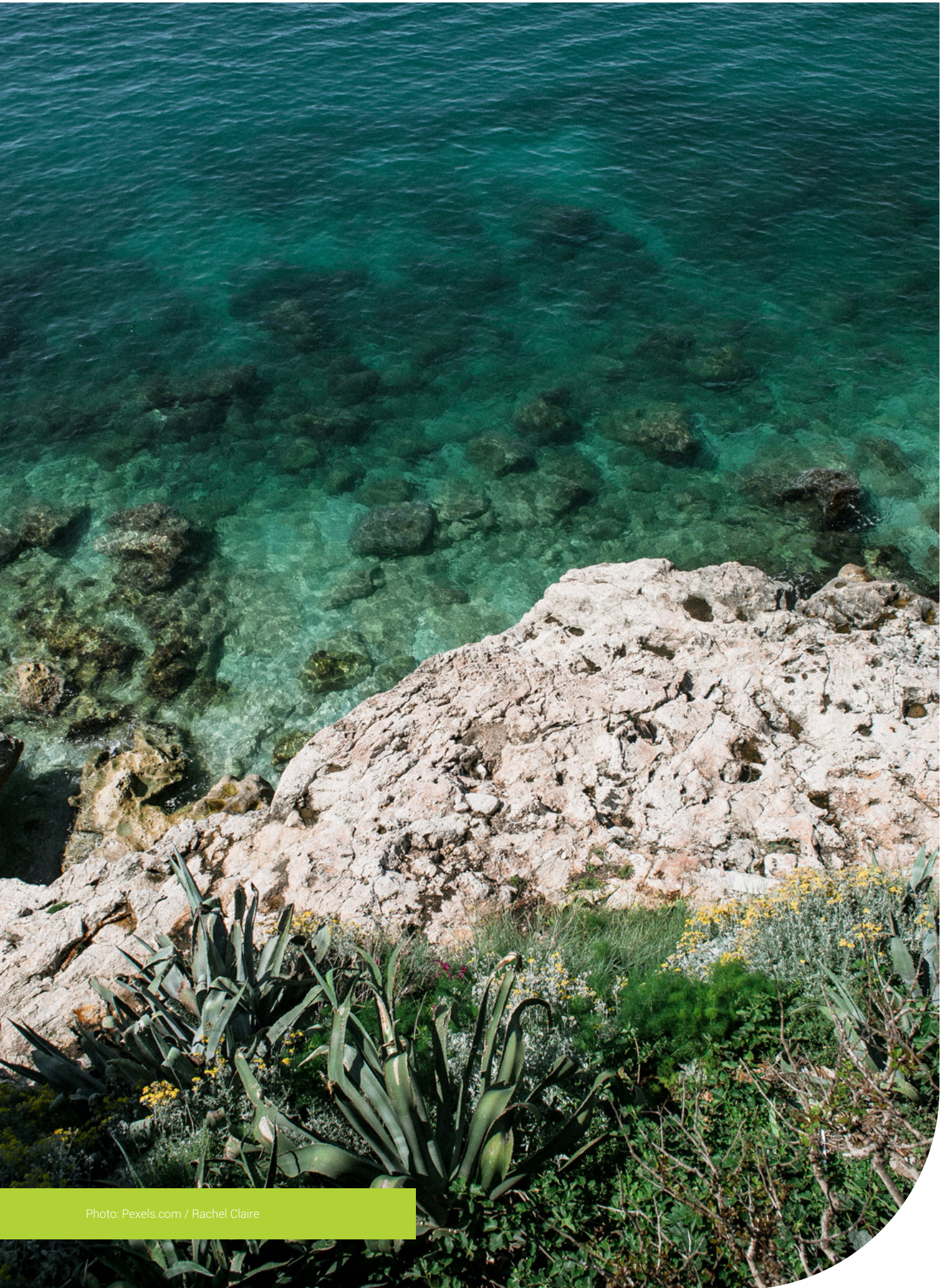


Photo: Pexels.com / Rachel Claire



# Foreword



***In the Mediterranean region, parliamentarians have a crucial role to play in advancing the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols for the benefit of all.***

At a time when the world grapples with a triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution and waste, resolute multilateral action to address these challenges is not just an ideal, but a vital necessity. International law is the foundation upon which the necessary cooperation can function and deliver.

Before it, all are equal, no matter their size or clout. International law is not just about obligations: it can foster solidarity and promote dialogue and peace. Developed within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP), the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) is the epitome of international law fostering multilateralism and solidarity at the regional level for environment and sustainable development.

The Barcelona Convention was adopted in 1976. It was amended in 1995 to integrate the outcomes of the landmark 1992 Rio Conference, including the definition of sustainable development. Today the Convention with its seven Protocols and complementary Decisions adopted by its Contracting Parties (21 coastal States and the European Union) constitute an important piece of the mosaic of regional Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) that underpin global ocean governance.

The implementation of MEAs requires robust and inclusive partnerships. In the Mediterranean region, parliamentarians have a crucial role to play in advancing the implementation of the Barcelona Convention

and its Protocols for the benefit of all. It is with this belief that UNEP/MAP joined forces with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) to produce the Parliamentarian's guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast.

The remarkable development of the regulatory framework and related measures has outpaced implementation. This has created gaps that informed and proactive parliamentary action can bridge. The publication offers an assortment of suggested action in areas pertaining to pollution prevention, biodiversity protection and conservation, and the integrated management of coastal zones. Linkages with global endeavours, such as the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs illustrate how the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols aligns with citizens' aspirations.

Our hope is that parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and everyone involved in parliamentary processes will find this publication useful. As a longstanding partner of UNEP/MAP, PAM shall disseminate this publication and promote its use by its Member States. Since its establishment in 2005, PAM has been at the forefront of dedicated regional and international initiatives and resolutions aimed at fostering parliamentary engagement on environmental protection and climate action. PAM is committed to promoting a surge in parliamentary action in support of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system's vision and objectives.

Thank you for your interest and action.

**Tatjana Hema**  
UNEP/MAP Coordinator

**Sergio Piazza**  
Secretary General of PAM

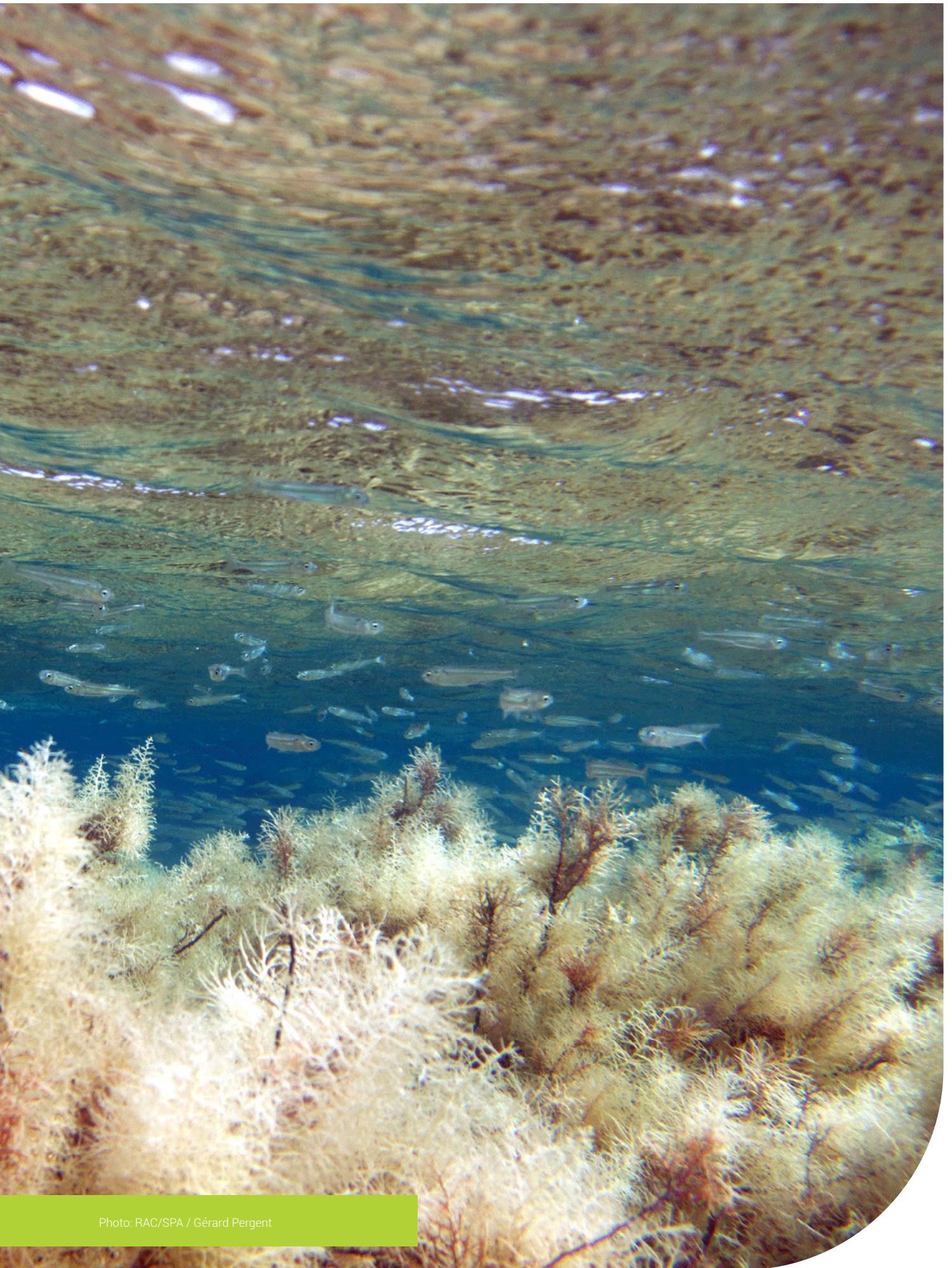


Photo: RAC/SPA / Gérard Pergent

# Introduction

Members of parliaments play a pivotal role in transposing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) into enforceable national law. Seen from that perspective, parliamentary work is one of the linchpins of environmental governance, giving meaning to supranational commitments and ensuring essential linkages with national institutions and processes.

Responding to a survey initiated by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) in the context of the preparation of the present publication, a number of PAM Member States that are also Contracting Parties<sup>1</sup> to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) shared examples of parliamentary action on the obligations arising from the Convention and its Protocols. Examples include the exercise of parliamentary oversight over implementation by the Executive Branch. One PAM Member State reported that parliamentary bodies work closely with the ministry overseeing economic affairs and sustainable development, with the MAP Focal Point<sup>2</sup> attending parliamentary meetings and debates on themes falling within the scope of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

## ***Collaborations between parliamentary commissions in charge of the environment, education, youth and sports with the aim of fostering young people's participation in discussions on environmental affairs***

The debates that take place in parliaments on issues addressed by MEAs constitute fertile grounds for coordinated governmental action, as several strands of the Executive Branch are called upon to address questions from parliamentarians or to present briefings

on cross-sectoral themes. For instance, parliamentary debates on the protection of coastal zones in the Mediterranean context typically require the involvement of several government departments: environment, industry, tourism, culture and heritage, defense and security, and urban planning. Engaging with parliaments on the implementation of MEAs (in this case, the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol to the Barcelona Convention) constitutes an important incentive for inter-ministerial coordination and for the deployment of whole-of-government approaches to environmental issues.

One important prerequisite for the full implementation of the Convention and its Protocols is citizen uptake. Parliamentarians, as representatives of their constituents, confer legitimacy and facilitate the enforcement of regulations as they trickle down from the international area to the national and local levels, sometimes with implications for taxpayers and household finances. One example cited by a PAM Member State in response to the survey shows collaborations between parliamentary commissions in charge of the environment, education, youth and sports with the aim of fostering young people's participation in discussions on environmental affairs. Another PAM Member State recognized that public participation, as stipulated in Article 15 of the Barcelona Convention, is consistent with the national Constitution.

<sup>1</sup> Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Türkiye, and the European Union

<sup>2</sup> The Contracting Parties appoint Focal Points to review the progress of work and ensure the implementation of decisions and recommendations at the national level. The MAP Focal Points serve as the official conduit for communication between the Secretariat and Contracting Parties.

***Designed as a handbook, the Parliamentarian's guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast (the Guide) is aimed at parliamentarians serving in the Mediterranean region and in the European Parliament—the EU being a Contracting Party— and at staff supporting them in discharging their duties.***

Parliamentarians serving in countries around the Mediterranean hail from a wide array of backgrounds. They may possess varying degrees of familiarity with MEAs. In addition to the inherent complexity of political, procedural and administrative aspects of parliamentary work (IPU and UNDP 2017), parliamentarians and the staffers assisting them are expected to be able to recognize and apprehend linkages between the domestic parliamentary agenda and legally binding provisions arising from MEAs.

The Barcelona Convention and its Protocols are a case in point: how can a newly elected parliamentarian be expected to instantly find their way through a myriad of legally binding provisions, including Regional Action Plans, addressing everything from chemical pollution to green shipping and sustainable consumption and production? Yet, familiarity with those provisions is essential to ensuring compliance at the national level. Ideally, conducting parliamentary work on themes falling within the ambit of the Convention requires a careful analysis of national obligations with the support of subject matter experts. This task can be daunting, time-consuming and, considering the typically copious agenda and tight schedule of parliamentarians, potentially overwhelming.

Notwithstanding progress made in integrating the environment into sectoral policies and the

establishment of integrated tools, including the Ecosystem Approach and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), gaps in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols persist (UNEP/MAP and Plan Bleu 2020). Parliamentarians around the Mediterranean are expected to play a central role in closing these gaps and, by so doing, in paving the way for the Mediterranean region's transition towards more environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive economies (UNEP 2010). This transition would entail the use of public policy tools, including legislation, taxes, enforcement measures, market incentives, and regulations (UNEP 2010).

Designed as a handbook, the Parliamentarian's guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast (the Guide) is aimed at parliamentarians serving in the Mediterranean region and in the European Parliament—the EU being a Contracting Party— and at staff supporting them in discharging their duties. The Guide offers practical entry points to the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system and includes non-prescriptive recommendations on how to leverage the core functions of parliament, notably representation, lawmaking, and oversight (IPU and UNDP 2017), and associated mechanisms to bridge gaps in compliance. The outcome sought through this publication is a higher level of compliance and enforcement at the national level around the Mediterranean Sea.

# Approach

The Guide combines an analytical summary of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system's literature, including the texts of the Convention and its Protocols, decisions adopted by the Contracting Parties, and select elements of the mandatory reporting obligations, with a desk review on parliamentary processes, building on relevant UNEP publications and other assets cited in the list of references (p.26)

To ensure relevance to the parliamentarians' needs, the Guide's structure was defined in consultation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), a member of the [Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development \(MCSD\)](#), in line with the [Memorandum of Understanding](#), capturing the long-standing cooperation between the PAM and UNEP/MAP.

As the holder of subject matter knowledge on national and regional parliamentary processes, PAM also contributed with substantive inputs on the role of

parliaments in the implementation of MEAs in general and the Barcelona Convention in particular—their contribution is acknowledged in page iii.

As the Guide took shape, it benefited from multiple rounds of consultations with PAM to ensure relevance. The Guide also encompasses some of the initial findings of a survey that PAM conducted among its Member States as a contribution to the publication and the planned dissemination and outreach efforts.

Based on the above, the Guide consists of:

- A didactic introduction (Part 1) that expounds the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system's legal and institutional dimensions, offering essential information with resources for further research.
- A handbook (Part 2) that provides an assortment of steps that parliamentarians can take as part of their core functions. The non-prescriptive recommendations it offers are designed to act as nudges, tips and catalyzers of deeper reflections and advanced endeavors led by parliamentarians around the Mediterranean.

# PART I

**The Mediterranean Action Plan,  
the Barcelona Convention and its  
Protocols: essential information for  
Mediterranean parliamentarians**

Photo: Freepix.com / Wirestock

# 1. Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in brief

Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) underpin global environmental governance, which is defined as “the sum of organizations, policy instruments, financing mechanisms, rules, procedures and norms that regulate the processes of global environmental protection” (UNEP 2010).

## Legally binding MEAs:

- provide the legal foundation upon which multilateral action can be undertaken to address environmental challenges that are often transboundary in nature.
- generate obligations for countries that have agreed to become Parties through ratification or accession. By providing a common framework where obligations are undertaken on an equal footing among all parties, MEAs allay concerns that national action on transboundary challenges creates a competitive disadvantage or harms national interests.

### Figure 1: Terminology essentials - What are Multilateral Environmental Agreements?

The term “Multilateral Environmental Agreement” or MEA is a broad term that relates to any of a number of legally binding international instruments through which national Governments commit to achieving specific environmental goals. These agreements may take different forms, such as “convention”, “treaty”, “agreement”, “charter”, “final act”, “pact”, “accord”, “covenant” or “protocol”. (UNEP 2006)

International parliaments have adopted several resolutions and decisions on the role of national and regional parliaments in environmental management and in combating global environmental degradation. In particular, the 114<sup>th</sup> session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) encourages parliaments to adopt national plans on major environmental issues and sustainable development, in connection with the ratification of international conventions and treaties.

The 32 Members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) have adopted several resolutions to promote parliamentary action to combat environmental degradation. At the 17<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session (9-10 March 2023), PAM Members unanimously adopted a Resolution<sup>3</sup> reiterating the importance of enforcing the provisions of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

Working individually or collectively and with the support of competent government departments and national institutions, parliamentarians can increase the efficacy of MEAs by pursuing synergies and reducing duplications. The introduction of legislation at the national level— a core function of parliamentarians— can serve the implementation of several MEAs at once, considering their thematic intersections.

3 Resolution unanimously adopted at the 17th PAM Plenary Session in Rabat on 1 March 2023 by all PAM Members attending the working session of the 2nd Standing Committee on Economic, Social, and Environmental Cooperation.

***International parliaments have adopted several resolutions and decisions on the role of national and regional parliaments in environmental management and in combating global environmental degradation.***

Crafting laws that address national obligations under several MEAs can streamline their implementation, alleviate the Party's burden of compliance through synergies, and foster whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to environmental action. (The alternative would be the introduction of a multitude of laws molded in existing silos and treading the rigid lines of institutional mandates.)

Considering that MEAs require, by design, cooperation among Parties, parliamentarians can foster and maintain such processes through multiple forms of parliamentary diplomacy and engagement within the framework of interparliamentary organizations.



Photo: RAC/SPA / University of Seville



## 2. The Barcelona Convention: the MEA dedicated to the Mediterranean Sea and coast

The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), adopted in 1976 and amended in 1995, is the principal Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) dedicated to the protection of marine and coastal ecosystems and the promotion of sustainable development.

The 22 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention are Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Türkiye and the European Union.

The Barcelona Convention was developed in the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP), the first of its kind to be launched within the [UNEP Regional Seas Programme](#), which harbors today more than 18 Actions Plans and Conventions.

**Figure 2: Terminology essentials - An important distinction** – The Barcelona Convention and the Barcelona Process refer to distinct regional endeavors:

The **Barcelona Convention** is an international treaty introduced within the framework of the United Nations Environment Programme's Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP).

The **Barcelona Process**, also known as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, is a political and economic initiative between the European Union and Mediterranean countries.

### 2.1 The institutional framework

UNEP/MAP implements activities adopted by the Contracting Parties and funded by the Mediterranean Trust Fund and other sources. These activities are packaged into action-oriented Programmes of Work adopted by the biennial meetings of the Contracting Parties.

### Figure 3: Vision of the Medium-Term Strategy of UNEP/MAP

"Progress towards a healthy, clean, sustainable and climate resilient Mediterranean Sea and Coast with productive and biologically diverse marine and coastal ecosystems, where the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and its SDGs are achieved through the effective implementation of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development for the benefit of people and nature."

In implementing the UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy (adopted by the Contracting Parties) and the related Programme of Work, the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit (based in Athens, Greece) works with seven MAP Components:

- The Mediterranean Pollution Assessment and Control Programme ([MED POL](#))
- The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea ([REMPEC](#)) based in Valletta, Malta.
- The Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre ([PB/RAC](#)) based in Marseille, France
- The Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre ([PAP/RAC](#)) based in Split, Croatia.
- The Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre ([SPA/RAC](#)) based in Tunis, Tunisia
- The Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production ([MedWaves](#)) based in Barcelona, Spain
- The Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication ([INFO/RAC](#)) based in Rome, Italy

## 2.2 The regulatory framework

The UNEP/MAP–Barcelona Convention system is the comprehensive institutional, legal and implementation framework that the Contracting Parties have adopted for concerted action to fulfil the vision of a healthy Mediterranean Sea and coast that underpin sustainable development in the Mediterranean region.

The regulatory dimension of the UNEP/MAP–Barcelona Convention system includes the legally binding provisions of the Convention and its seven Protocols and the measures introduced to facilitate their implementation, including strategies and action plans on biodiversity conservation and protection, marine litter, sustainable consumption and production and circularity, and several other themes.

The Barcelona Convention comprises 35 articles capturing the Contracting Parties' commitment to

“individually or jointly take all appropriate measures in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and the Protocols in force to which they are party to prevent, abate, combat and to the fullest possible extent eliminate pollution of the Mediterranean Sea Area and to protect and enhance the marine environment in that Area so as to contribute towards its sustainable development (UNEP 2019). They cooperate in the formulation and adoption of Protocols, prescribing agreed measures, procedures and standards for the implementation of this Convention.”

The Convention is complemented by seven Protocols bringing an additional set of obligations on specific themes:

- The Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft (**Dumping Protocol**)
- The Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Case of Emergency (**Prevention and Emergency Protocol**)
- The Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution from Land-Based Sources (**Land-Based Sources Protocol**)
- The Protocol Concerning Mediterranean Specially Protected Areas (**Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity Protocol**)
- The Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution Resulting from the Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf and the Seabed and its Subsoil (**Offshore Protocol**)
- The Protocol on the Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (**Hazardous Wastes Protocol**)
- The Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean (**ICZM Protocol**)

The regulatory framework comprising the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols continues to evolve as new challenges emerge in the Mediterranean region. From

1976 to 2023, more than 20 regulatory measures and 27 strategies and action plans have been adopted by the Contracting Parties to implement the Convention and its Protocols.

### 2.3 The governing and subsidiary bodies

**The Meeting of Contracting Parties (COP)**, convened every two years, is the supreme decision-making body of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. The Contracting Parties are represented by accredited officials, who review the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols and take [Decisions on the policies, strategies and MAP Programme of Work and Budget](#).

#### Figure 4: Terminology essentials - The Secretariat

In line with Article 17 of the Barcelona Convention, UNEP provides secretariat services to the Contracting Parties through its [MAP Coordinating Unit](#), established in Athens in 1982 on the basis of a Host Country Agreement signed between Greece and UNEP.

The **MAP Focal Points**<sup>4</sup> are appropriately empowered representatives of the Contracting Parties who serve as the official conduit for communication with the Secretariat, coordinating with governmental and/or administrative bodies, as appropriate, for the preparation of the meetings of the Contracting Parties.

**The Bureau** of six representatives of the Contracting Parties, elected in their personal capacity by the Ordinary Meetings of the Contracting Parties, provides guidance on the implementation of the Programme of work in the intersessional period, in consultation with the focal points of the Contracting Parties.

**The Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)**, established in 1995, by virtue of Article 4 of the Barcelona Convention, the MCSD is an advisory body to the Contracting Parties to assist them in their efforts to integrate environmental issues in their socio-economic programmes and to promote sustainable development policies in the Mediterranean region. Acting as a forum for experience sharing

and peer learning, the Commission is unique in its composition. Its members include representatives of governments, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, the scientific community and parliamentarians. All MCSD members participate in its meetings on an equal footing.

#### Figure 5: Terminology essentials - Compliance and Enforcement

Compliance refers to the act of adhering to the obligations and provisions set out in a treaty. It is the responsibility of each state party to ensure that it meets its obligations under the treaty. Enforcement refers to the measures taken to ensure compliance with a treaty.

**The Compliance Committee:** The Barcelona Convention Compliance Mechanism established a [Compliance Committee](#) dedicated to assisting Parties in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. The Procedures and Mechanisms on compliance were adopted in 2008 and amended in 2012, 2013, and 2023. They include provisions on cases of non-compliance with the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

#### Figure 6: The Compliance Committee

Individuals wishing to lodge submissions concerning the alleged non-compliance of a Party shall address a written report to the Compliance Committee through the Secretariat, supported by substantiating information setting out the matter of concern and the relevant provisions of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. The Secretariat shall, within two weeks of receiving a submission, send a copy of that submission to the Contracting Party concerned. The Compliance Committee may decide not to proceed with a submission that it considers to be anonymous, de minimis or manifestly ill founded. The Secretariat shall inform about the Committee's findings within two weeks of the date of the findings.

4 [List of MAP Focal Points](#)



Photo: RAC/SPA / Mathieu Foulquié

# 3. Obligations and legally binding measures under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols are expected to individually or jointly take all appropriate measures to implement the Convention and those Protocols in force to which they are party. UNEP/MAP stimulates and enables the sharing of know-how and best practices among the Contracting Parties, and supports their action through the Programme of Work and a portfolio of projects mobilizing additional funds and expertise in the spirit of regional solidarity enshrined in the Convention.

## 3.1 An illustrative sample of measures to implement the Barcelona Convention:

- Introduce legal and regulatory measures at the national level to prevent and combat pollution, protect marine and coastal biodiversity, and periodically monitor and assess the marine and coastal environment and the socio-economic drivers that affect it.
- Enter into relevant bilateral or multilateral agreements to further the implementation of the Convention.
- Enact policy measures for the promotion of sustainable development and the integration of environmental protection in development policies.
- Ensure the public's access to information in accordance with Article 15 of the Convention.

## 3.2 An illustrative sample of measures to implement the Protocols:

- Reduce and prevent plastic pollution to avoid the generation of marine litter, including from land-based sources and ships.
- Prohibit incineration and dumping at sea from ships and aircraft except in technically well-defined cases

where no other management or disposable options are available on land.

- Implement MARPOL and other IMO Conventions in the Mediterranean.
- Protect natural habitats and endangered species, combat the introduction of non-indigenous species (NIS) and enhance coverage by Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) in the Mediterranean Sea and coast.
- Develop and apply advanced tools for the integrated management of land-sea interaction, including through the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), involving to the extent possible all stakeholders at all governance levels.
- Prevent and control the transboundary movement of hazardous waste in the Mediterranean Sea area.

## 3.3 An online system to report on measures taken at the national level

The mandatory periodical reports that the Contracting Parties transmit to the Secretariat provide important information on the relevant legal, administrative and other measures taken to further the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. These reports contain evidence on the effectiveness of the measures and information on the challenges encountered in their implementation. The reports also provide a basis for the formulation of evidence-based recommendations by the Contracting Parties to accelerate implementation and bring about full compliance.

To ensure consistency, national reports are submitted through the Barcelona Convention Reporting System (BCRS), in line with the [Reporting Format](#) adopted by the Contracting Parties in 2017.

# PART II

**Parliamentary action for healthy marine and coastal ecosystems that underpin sustainable development in the Mediterranean**

Photo: Pexels.com / Pixabay

## i. Parliamentary action to strengthen the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols

Depending on the context in which they operate, parliamentarians can take a range of steps to ensure the full implementation of the Contracting Parties' obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols:

- **Domestication:** In addition to ratification and acceptance, parliamentarians play a pivotal role in the transposition of the Contracting Party's obligations into national law (UNEP 2006). Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) can take steps to ensure that obligations are fully integrated into European Union legislation and directives.
- **Budgeting:** In the context of national budgeting exercises, parliamentarians can ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the implementation of the Contracting Party's obligations (UNDP 2017), including through the mobilization of means of implementation and enforcement of existing or newly introduced national laws. The European Parliament, together with the European Council, can streamline the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols into the EU's budget. The advancement of gender equality through active engagement in gender-responsive budgeting is crucial.

- **Oversight:** Parliaments hold the Executive Branch accountable for enforcing laws reflecting national obligations arising from the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. The exercise of oversight may include holding context-relevant forms of question periods and hearings and inviting government officials to address enquiries from parliamentary committees (UNEP and GLOBE 2018; IPU 2007).

In addition to catalyzing and accelerating the implementation of the obligations of the Contracting Parties in which they serve, parliamentarians can advocate for more ambitious, nationally appropriate action, including by exceeding the commonly agreed targets set in fields such as the reduction of pollution, biodiversity conservation goals or the transition to a circular economy (among other fields of action that would benefit from heightened parliamentary attention).

*The exercise of oversight may include holding context-relevant forms of question periods and hearings and inviting government officials to address enquiries from parliamentary committees*

### Figure 7: Terminology essentials - Gender-Responsive Budgeting

Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is a strategic policy approach to systematically integrate gender equality objectives into government policy, planning, budgeting, monitoring, evaluation, and audits. It highlights the distributive impacts of the budget (revenue and expenditure) on women and men and adjusts, or reallocates, resources to ensure that both benefit equally from government resources (UN Women 2022).

### Figure 8: Time-bound targets for the Mediterranean

Learn more about the time-bound targets adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols:

- [Thematic regional strategies and action plans](#)
- [Regional regulatory measures](#)

## ii. A checklist for parliamentarians and their staff:



### 1. Acquire a better understanding of the scope and objectives of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols

Parliamentarians and their staff can take the InforMEA online (free) course to acquire or upgrade knowledge of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

[InforMEA](#) is the United Nations information portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). It provides access to a variety of resources on MEAs. The fully online Introductory Course to the Mediterranean Action Plan and the Barcelona Convention is accessible through free subscription.

Upon completion of the course, learners will be able to:

- describe the variety of the legally binding obligations and other related measures under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols
- define the institutional arrangements put in place to implement the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols
- list the major strategies and guiding principles of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system.



### 2. Consider how the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system encompasses the SDGs

Parliamentary commitment is essential to the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs, "as lawmakers, arbiters and scrutinisers of government decision-making; as budget-setters and reviewers; and as leaders, conveners or enablers of partnerships for sustainable development". In paragraph 79, the 2030 Agenda also highlights the relevance of national parliaments to monitoring of progress towards sustainable development (UNEP and GLOBE 2018).

In addition to the protection of the marine and coastal environment, the mandate of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system includes the promotion of sustainable development. The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) constitutes a regionally appropriate and consensual framework outlining the Contracting Parties' priorities for sustainable development. The [current iteration of the MSSD](#) reflects the global consensus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs.

The MSSD is devised within the framework of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)—an inclusive sustainability forum established within the framework of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system. The MSSD is aligned with the [Rio+20 Outcome Document](#)<sup>5</sup> and the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), and contributes to the achievement of the SDGs and their targets as part of the delivery of the UNEP/MAP mandate.

5 The future we want - outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20-22 June 2012 (A / CONF.216/L.1\*)





### 3. Initiate or catalyze action to fill gaps in ratification

The UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system responds to global developments and to emerging scientific knowledge. The Barcelona Convention itself was amended in 1995 to reflect the global consensus on sustainable development forged at the Earth Summit in 1992. By introducing amendments to the Protocols and associated regional plans, the system upgrades the instruments that the Contracting Parties have at their disposal to protect the Mediterranean Sea and coast and achieve sustainable development. Ratification is required for amendments to the Protocols to enter into force.

- Parliaments in the Mediterranean region, including the European Parliament, can prioritize the ratification of the Protocols to the Barcelona Convention and relevant amendments. At the time

this publication was being finalized (June 2023), the amendments to the Dumping Protocol lacked a single ratification by one of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to enter into force.

- Parliamentary organizations, notably those working at the regional level, can accelerate the ratification of Protocols and amendments by national parliaments, including through awareness-raising (best practices and explainers on the benefits of ratification) and the dissemination of country-specific information.

Parliamentarians are encouraged to visit the [UNEP/MAP website](#) for regular updates on the status of signatures and ratifications of each of the seven Protocols and relevant amendments. The updates are based on notifications received from the Government of Spain acting as the Depository for the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

**Figure 9: Status of ratification of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.**

| Status of Ratification of the Barcelona Convention and Protocols by individual Contracting Parties as of July 2023  |         |         |                        |         |        |                |       |        |        |        |       |         |       |       |        |            |         |          |       |                      |         |         |   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|------------------------|---------|--------|----------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|---------|-------|-------|--------|------------|---------|----------|-------|----------------------|---------|---------|---|
| Contracting Parties                                                                                                 | Albania | Algeria | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Croatia | Cyprus | European Union | Egypt | France | Greece | Israel | Italy | Lebanon | Libya | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | Morocco | Slovenia | Spain | Syrian Arab Republic | Tunisia | Türkiye |   |
| Legal instruments                                                                                                   |         |         |                        |         |        |                |       |        |        |        |       |         |       |       |        |            |         |          |       |                      |         |         |   |
| Barcelona Convention and Amendments                                                                                 | ■       | ■       | ■                      | ■       | ■      | ■              | ■     | ■      | ■      | ■      | ■     | ■       | ■     | ■     | ■      | ■          | ■       | ■        | ■     | ■                    | ■       | ■       | ■ |
| Dumping Protocol and Amendments                                                                                     | ■       | ■       | ■                      | ■       | ■      | ■              | ■     | ■      | ■      | ■      | ■     | ■       | ■     | ■     | ■      | ■          | ■       | ■        | ■     | ■                    | ■       | ■       | ■ |
| Emergency Protocol                                                                                                  | ■       | ■       | ■                      | ■       | ■      | ■              | ■     | ■      | ■      | ■      | ■     | ■       | ■     | ■     | ■      | ■          | ■       | ■        | ■     | ■                    | ■       | ■       | ■ |
| Prevention and Emergency Protocol                                                                                   | ■       | ■       | ■                      | ■       | ■      | ■              | ■     | ■      | ■      | ■      | ■     | ■       | ■     | ■     | ■      | ■          | ■       | ■        | ■     | ■                    | ■       | ■       | ■ |
| LBS Protocol and Amendments                                                                                         | ■       | ■       | ■                      | ■       | ■      | ■              | ■     | ■      | ■      | ■      | ■     | ■       | ■     | ■     | ■      | ■          | ■       | ■        | ■     | ■                    | ■       | ■       | ■ |
| SPA Protocol                                                                                                        | ■       | ■       | ■                      | ■       | ■      | ■              | ■     | ■      | ■      | ■      | ■     | ■       | ■     | ■     | ■      | ■          | ■       | ■        | ■     | ■                    | ■       | ■       | ■ |
| SPA and Biodiversity Protocol                                                                                       | ■       | ■       | ■                      | ■       | ■      | ■              | ■     | ■      | ■      | ■      | ■     | ■       | ■     | ■     | ■      | ■          | ■       | ■        | ■     | ■                    | ■       | ■       | ■ |
| Offshore Protocol                                                                                                   | ■       | ■       | ■                      | ■       | ■      | ■              | ■     | ■      | ■      | ■      | ■     | ■       | ■     | ■     | ■      | ■          | ■       | ■        | ■     | ■                    | ■       | ■       | ■ |
| Hazardous Wastes Protocol                                                                                           | ■       | ■       | ■                      | ■       | ■      | ■              | ■     | ■      | ■      | ■      | ■     | ■       | ■     | ■     | ■      | ■          | ■       | ■        | ■     | ■                    | ■       | ■       | ■ |
| ICZM Protocol                                                                                                       | ■       | ■       | ■                      | ■       | ■      | ■              | ■     | ■      | ■      | ■      | ■     | ■       | ■     | ■     | ■      | ■          | ■       | ■        | ■     | ■                    | ■       | ■       | ■ |
| Instrument of ratification, adhesion approval or accession deposited, and Convention or Protocol entered into force | ■       |         |                        |         |        |                |       |        |        |        |       |         |       |       |        |            |         |          |       |                      |         |         |   |
| No instrument of ratification, adhesion, approval or accession deposited                                            | □       |         |                        |         |        |                |       |        |        |        |       |         |       |       |        |            |         |          |       |                      |         |         |   |
| Instrument of ratification, adhesion, approval or accession deposited but Protocol has not entered into force yet   | ■       |         |                        |         |        |                |       |        |        |        |       |         |       |       |        |            |         |          |       |                      |         |         |   |
| Instrument of ratification, adhesion, approval or accession issued but still not yet deposited                      | ■       |         |                        |         |        |                |       |        |        |        |       |         |       |       |        |            |         |          |       |                      |         |         |   |



#### 4. Recognize the ramifications of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in the parliamentary agenda

A vast array of themes that parliamentarians address as part of their legislating role have linkages with the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. Those linkages become visible when parliamentary agenda are considered through the lens of obligations.

The table offers examples of recurrent themes addressed by parliamentarians and outlines the relevant obligations that the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols must meet. The wide spectrum of themes illustrates the scope of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system's mandate in the Mediterranean region.

**TABLE 1: Parliamentary agenda themes and relevant obligations under the Barcelona Convention**

| Parliamentary agenda theme <sup>6</sup>                                                          | Relevant obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Industry and chemicals                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prevention and Emergency Protocol - Articles 4 and 14</li> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, Article 9</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean</a><sup>7</sup></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production</a><sup>8</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                               |
| Climate change adaptation                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, Articles 5, 8, 22 and 23</li> <li>▪ Prevention and Emergency Protocol, Articles 4 and 14</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Energy and renewables                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prevention and Emergency Protocol – Article 14</li> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, Article 9</li> <li>▪ Offshore Protocol</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Agriculture, food systems and fisheries                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production</a></li> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, Articles 9 and 12</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Marine litter, waste management, the reduction of waste, tackling plastic pollution <sup>9</sup> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean</a><sup>10</sup></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production</a></li> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, Articles 9 and 12</li> <li>▪ Prevention and Emergency Protocol, Articles 4 and 14</li> <li>▪ Offshore Protocol, Articles 12 and 13</li> <li>▪ Regional Measures (<a href="#">Decision IG 25/18</a>)</li> </ul> |

6 A non-exhaustive list of themes that make frequent appearances on parliamentary agendas

7 Adopted under Article 15 of the Land-Based Sources (LBS) Protocol

8 Adopted under Articles 5.4 and 9(c) of the Land-Based Sources Protocol Art. 5.2 of the Hazardous Wastes Protocol, Article 9 of the ICZM Protocol

9 [Three facts about the Mediterranean experience in tackling plastic pollution](#)

10 Adopted under Article 15 of the Land-Based Sources (LBS) Protocol

| Parliamentary agenda theme <sup>6</sup>                                                             | Relevant obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Prevention of pollution of the marine and coastal environment, wastewater management and sanitation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, Article 9</li> <li>▪ Prevention and Emergency Protocol, Articles 4, 6, 8, 11, 12 and 14</li> <li>▪ Offshore Protocol, Articles 12, 13, 16 and 17</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Mining and construction materials                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, Article 9</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Territorial development, Land-use, coastal zone management, urban planning, sustainable cities      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, in particular Article 8</li> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, in particular Article 8</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Multimodal transport, low-emission maritime transport, safe shipping                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, Articles 8 and 12</li> <li>▪ Prevention and Emergency Protocol, Articles 4 and 14</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Fishing and aquaculture                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, Articles 9 and 12</li> <li>▪ SPA/BD Protocol, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Annex II "List of endangered or threatened species"</li> <li>▪ Annex III "List of species whose exploitation is regulated."</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (<a href="#">Post-2020 SAPBIO</a>)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Tourism                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, Articles 9 and 12</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production</a></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Infrastructure                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, Articles 6 and 9</li> <li>▪ Prevention and Emergency Protocol, Article 14</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Marine and coastal Biodiversity conservation and natural resources management                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SPA/BD Protocol and associated strategies and action plans, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The <a href="#">Post-2020 SAPBIO</a></li> <li>▪ Action Plan for the conservation of cartilaginous fishes (Chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean Sea; Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea; Action plan for the management of the Mediterranean Monk Seal (<i>Monachus monachus</i>) ; Action Plan for the conservation of marine turtles in the Mediterranean; Action Plan for the conservation of marine and coastal bird species listed in Annex II of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean; Action Plan concerning Species Introductions and Invasive Species in the Mediterranean Sea; Action Plan for the conservation of habitats and species associated with seamounts, underwater caves and canyons, aphotic hard beds and chemo-synthetic phenomena in the Mediterranean Sea; Action Plan for the conservation of marine vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea; Action Plan for the conservation of the Coralligenous and Other Calcareous Bio-concretions in the Mediterranean Sea; Regional Strategy for the conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ ICZM Protocol, Articles 5, 8, 10, 11 and 12 (referring specifically to islands)</li> <li>▪ Prevention and Emergency Protocol, Article 4</li> </ul> |
| Designation of marine and coastal protected areas and area-based protection and management measures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SPA/BD Protocol, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Annex I "Common criteria for the choice of protected marine and coastal areas that could be included in the SPAMI List"</li> <li>▪ Annex II "List of endangered or threatened species"</li> <li>▪ Annex III "List of species whose exploitation is regulated."</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Post-2020 Regional Strategy for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean</a></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |



## 5. Monitor and strengthen compliance and enforcement of existing legislation

Parliamentarians can bolster the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols by taking three types of actions that are consistent with their remit:

### 5.1 Scrutinizing the mandatory implementation reports prepared and submitted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols:

- Request access to, and follow the preparation of, implementation reports. Table 2 presents a selection of reporting themes and provides suggestions on what parliamentarians can do to promote greater compliance at the national level.
- Advocate for the accurate and timely compilation and submission of implementation reports by competent authorities.
- Recognize and address difficulties faced in carrying out the mandatory reporting obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, including by ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to competent national institutions for that purpose.

### 5.2 Fostering interdepartmental coordination for more impactful action by the Executive

Parliamentarians can advocate for a whole-of-government approach to the enforcement of existing legislation transposing the provisions of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. Considering that ministries of the environment often lack the means for effective implementation, parliamentarians can play a role in enlisting the support of other departments of the Executive. Mechanisms for inter-ministerial cooperation on enforcement of environmental laws are critical, given the multiplicity of government departments and state institutions involved in the themes addressed by

the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. Coastal zone management, for instance, typically lies at the intersection of ministerial mandates pertaining to security and defense, tourism, culture, territorial planning and the environment.

### 5.3 Mainstreaming obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in the Contracting Party's bilateral and international cooperation programmes

Parliamentarians who take part in shaping, negotiating, or adopting cooperation programmes with international partners can ensure that they are aligned with the Contracting Party's obligations arising from the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. Such programmes can be harnessed to mobilize resources and build national capacity for the fulfillment of obligations. The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)<sup>11</sup> is a case in point.

The United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 defines UNSDCF as "the most important instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda)". This pivotal document guides the entire programme cycle, driving planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of collective UN support for achieving the 2030 Agenda in the country<sup>12</sup>. Considering that it is drawn up in consultation with national partners, parliamentarians can actively seek opportunities for engagement with other national stakeholders and the UN Country Team to advocate for the mainstreaming of obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in the UNSDCF as an integral part of the country's pursuit of the SDGs.

<sup>11</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-guidance>

<sup>12</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/cooperation-framework>

**TABLE 2: Suggestions for parliamentary action regarding mandatory reporting obligations under the Barcelona Convention**

| Elements of the mandatory implementation reports under the Barcelona Convention                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Action that parliamentarians can take based on the information contained in the reports                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) when undertaken for proposed activities that are likely to cause a significant adverse effect on the marine and coastal environment</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>Parliamentarians can <b>request briefings</b> on the outcome of EIAs, especially if the assessed activities are likely to affect their constituents.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Application of the Precautionary and Polluter Pays Principles</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>Parliamentarians can <b>exercise oversight</b> to ensure that these principles enshrined in the Barcelona Convention are applied adequately.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The establishment of a system to monitor the pollution of the marine environment and its coastal areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>Parliamentarians can support the establishment of such systems in multiple forms, including through the <b>endorsement of adequate budgets</b> as part of national budget development or budget voting exercises (where applicable).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Measures taken to ensure public access to information on the state of the marine environment and its coastal areas, and on activities carried out and/or measures taken to implement the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>Parliamentarians should have a particular interest in these themes as they pertain to <b>their constituents' rights of access to information</b> and participation in decision-making.</p> <p>Through their representation role, Parliamentarians can <b>demand access to public consultations</b> and, based on the information provided in the reports, exercise oversight and request additional information or further action from competent authorities.</p>                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Measures taken to ensure public participation and consultation in decision-making processes related to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the development of gender-responsive policies and legislation for the protection of the marine environment and its coastal area</li> <li>▪ the authorization of proposed activities likely to cause damage to the marine environment and its coastal areas.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p><b>Leave no one behind:</b> parliamentarians can establish whether public consultations that are reported by the Contracting Party have been inclusive (including from a gender-equality perspective) and effective. Where gaps or shortcomings are noted, parliamentarians can request corrective action through appropriate channels.</p> <p><b>Gender-responsive approaches</b> must not only explicitly recognise girls' and women's diverse and gender-specific interests and needs, but also ensure their participation and leadership in action, including on themes addressed by the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.</p> |
| <p>Measures introduced for the promotion of sustainable development and the integration of environmental protection in development policies, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Domestic strategies for sustainable development and other relevant sectoral development policies that include the protection of the marine environment and its coastal areas, particularly from land-based sources of pollution and activities, pollution from ships, and the Protection and conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity, taking into consideration the priority objectives, actions and targets of the relevant Regional Strategies adopted in the framework of UNEP/MAP.</li> <li>▪ Physical plans of the coastal zone(s) that give due regard to the protection of the marine environment and its coastal zone through the use of Integrated Coastal Zone Management and related methodological tools.</li> </ul> | <p>Parliamentarians can request briefings on the relevant national strategies and plans in place and ensure that they are in line with the Contracting Party's obligations.</p> <p>They can also <b>request regular reports</b> on their implementation from competent authorities.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| Elements of the mandatory implementation reports under the Barcelona Convention                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Action that parliamentarians can take based on the information contained in the reports                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Economic instruments, such as taxes, fees, funds and charges, that have been established to promote the protection of the marine environment and its coastal areas and conserve their biodiversity.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>Parliamentarians can request briefings from competent authorities on the efficacy of such instruments in bringing about the positive outcomes sought from their introduction. This is essential to <b>optimizing the use of fiscal instruments</b>, including by eliminating unnecessary burdens on citizens and seeking more effective alternatives, where applicable.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bilateral or multilateral agreements that the Contracting Parties enter into, including at the regional or sub-regional level, for the promotion of sustainable development, the protection of the environment, the conservation and preservation of natural resources in the Mediterranean Sea Area, consistent with the Convention and Protocols and international law.</li> </ul> | <p>Parliamentarians can endorse such partnerships and exercise oversight to ensure that they are implemented.</p> <p><b>Partnerships and regional solidarity contribute to achieving the objectives of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system</b>, particularly by enabling coordinated action on transboundary challenges.</p>                                              |



## 6. Engage with constituents and support a whole-of-society approach to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols

By virtue of their representation role, parliamentarians play an important role in ensuring public participation in line with Article 15 of the Barcelona Convention. Where applicable, they can advocate for accession to the [Aarhus Convention](#)<sup>13</sup>. The Aarhus Convention's

objectives include increasing governments' accountability and transparency, with clear benefits for the implementation of all MEAs, including the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

### Figure 10: Barcelona Convention, Article 15 - Public information and participation

1. The Contracting Parties shall ensure that their competent authorities shall give to the public appropriate access to information on the environmental state in the field of application of the Convention and the Protocols, on activities or measures adversely affecting or likely to affect it and on activities carried out or measures taken in accordance with the Convention and the Protocols.

2. The Contracting Parties shall ensure that the opportunity is given to the public to participate in

decision-making processes relevant to the field of application of the Convention and the Protocols, as appropriate.

3. The provision of paragraph 1 of this Article shall not prejudice the right of Contracting Parties to refuse, in accordance with their legal systems and applicable international regulations, to provide access to such information on the ground of confidentiality, public security or investigation proceedings, stating the reasons for such a refusal.

<sup>13</sup> The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was adopted in 1998 in Aarhus, Denmark.

Concrete action that parliamentarians can take include:

- Working with civil society and local authorities, including coastal municipalities, and channeling concerns voiced, and observations made, by citizens to decision-making spheres. This can enhance compliance by triggering early action on reports of alleged non-compliance, thus minimizing impact on the marine and coastal environment as well as on women and men who are dependent on it.
- Fostering greater inclusiveness and participation of women, youth and marginalized and vulnerable groups (UNEP and GLOBE 2018), recognizing their role as agents of change, in the spirit of [Article 15 of the Barcelona Convention](#).
- Mainstreaming the implementation of the Contracting Party's obligations arising from the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in their individual electoral programme or, where applicable, their political party's manifesto and environment/sustainable development policy platform. Themes such as the "green transition" and the "sustainable blue economy" may constitute suitable entry points for the mainstreaming of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in domestic political debates and in achieving consensus across the political spectrum on the need for full compliance and enforcement of relevant legislation.
- Engaging with organizations representing the private sector and local networks of the Global Compact<sup>14</sup> to encourage businesses to integrate compliance with the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols into product design and value chain management.
- Promoting ocean literacy<sup>15</sup> and the mainstreaming of education for sustainable development in national educational programmes, including by promoting the use of the [Young Person's guide to the Mediterranean Action Plan and the Barcelona Convention](#).

- Acknowledging the role of women in the stewardship of ecosystems<sup>16</sup> and their contributions as managers of natural resources and promote gender equality and women's empowerment, including in the crucial fields of employment regulations, land tenure and access to financial resources, education, and training.



## Leverage networking by supporting international and regional parliamentary organizations

As part of its advocacy strategy, UNEP/MAP has established links with several parliamentary organizations operating in the region, including the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (PA OSCE), the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM).

Parliamentary structures provide settings in which parliamentarians can join inter-regional groups, designate special monitoring committees, nominate special rapporteurs on specific issues relevant to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, and appoint regional commissions tasked with furthering the objectives of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system.

Cooperation between UNEP/MAP and parliamentary organizations is articulated around five priorities:

- Accelerating the full implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and advocating their universal ratification and their enforcement through national legislation and measures.
- Mobilizing parliamentary diplomacy in support of regional multilateralism and solidarity for environmental protection and sustainable development.

14 <https://unglobalcompact.org/>

15 United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030): <https://en.unesco.org/ocean-decade>

16 "Heroes of sustainability in the Mediterranean", a news feature published on the occasion of the 2021 edition of International Women's Day

**Parliamentary structures provide settings in which parliamentarians can join inter-regional groups, designate special monitoring committees, nominate special rapporteurs on specific issues relevant to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, and appoint regional commissions tasked with furthering the objectives of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system.**

- Bolstering science-policy interfaces and fostering a multi-stakeholder dialogue to enable evidence-based, inclusive policymaking in the region.
- Launching joint advocacy initiatives on common priority themes, such as climate change, marine litter, biodiversity conservation and marine protected areas, sustainable blue economy, access to environmental information, participation and justice, and education for sustainable development.
- Promoting and implementing common initiatives to advance the delivery of the SDGs in the Mediterranean.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) and the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD) have signed Memoranda of Understanding<sup>17</sup> with UNEP/MAP to facilitate collaboration in furthering their shared goals and objectives

PAM encourages regional parliamentary cooperation to advance the implementation of the [Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development \(MSSD\)](#), and to further collective work in addressing environmental challenges in the region. Every year, PAM members representing 32 parliaments come together for the PAM Plenary Session to examine the PAM annual Report and adopt a Resolution assessing the state of the environment in the basin, thus promoting parliamentary action to combat, inter alia, regional

environmental degradation. At the 17<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session (9-10 March 2023), PAM Members unanimously adopted<sup>18</sup> a Resolution reiterating the importance of enforcing the provisions of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

COMPSUD has [pledged](#)<sup>19</sup> support to shoring up efforts to achieve and maintain the Good Environmental Status (GES) of the Mediterranean by working with UNEP/MAP to accelerate the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols through coordinated advocacy efforts and a strengthened science-policy interface.

Taking part in the 20th Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), the Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly reiterated<sup>20</sup> the pivotal role that parliamentarians play in advancing and addressing environmental challenges. Members of Parliament, he underlined, have the powers to shape national legislation, allocate resources, and hold governments accountable for their commitments.

By leveraging the networking opportunities that parliamentary organizations offer, parliamentarians serving in the Mediterranean region can:

- uphold the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols by the Contracting Parties as a regional public good that generates benefits for all Mediterranean citizens.

17 [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/41711/21ig25\\_27\\_2503ann2\\_eng.pdf](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/41711/21ig25_27_2503ann2_eng.pdf)

18 <https://www.pam.int/en/press-releases/work-2nd-standing-committee-economic-social-and-environmental-cooperation-presented>

19 [UNEP/MAP and COMPSUD step up cooperation for sustainable development in the Mediterranean region \(UNEP/MAP press release, 12 April 2022\)](#)

20 [Pons stresses urgency of promoting green development in the Mediterranean basin while safeguarding environment \(PA OSCE press release, 15 June 2023\)](#)



- engage in parliamentary diplomacy to foster transboundary cooperation in the spirit of regional solidarity enshrined in the Barcelona Convention. Interparliamentary organizations provide forums for debate on key environmental issues that can be then brought forward in a more coordinated and impactful manner.
- promote the implementation of the MSSD as a regionally agreed platform to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs.
- strengthen science-policy interfaces by inviting scientists and experts affiliated to [UNEP/MAP](#) and [MedECC](#), among other institutions, to present and disseminate the findings of reports on the achievement of Good Environmental Status, on the State of the Environment and Development, and on climate and environmental change in the Mediterranean region, as well as the findings of foresight studies.

**Table 3: Examples<sup>21</sup> from Mediterranean parliaments taking action to advance the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols**

|                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Exercising oversight</b>                                                      | In Cyprus, as part of parliamentary scrutiny of the Executive, competent authorities address questions <sup>22</sup> from parliamentarians regarding progress achieved in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Interaction with the MAP Focal Point and national institutions</b>            | In Croatia, parliamentary bodies that work on the implementation of the Barcelona Convention work closely with the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (Water Management and Marine Protection Directorate, Service for the Sea and Coastal Areas). This cooperation includes the participation of the Director of the Water Management and Sea Protection Directorate (MAP Focal Point) in relevant parliamentary meetings and debates. |
| <b>Working with the public to ensure access to information and participation</b> | In Monaco, the “Environment and Quality of Life” Commission established within the National Council, the representative assembly of Monaco, has joined forces with the Commission for Education, Youth and Sports, which brings together twelve young people aged between 12-16 to discuss and propose projects, including in the field of environmental protection.                                                                                 |



Photo: RAC/SPA / Mathieu Foulquié

<sup>21</sup> Based on a survey conducted by PAM in May 2023

<sup>22</sup> Question no. 23.06.011.03.274, dated 25 October 2018, of MP Mr. Charalambos Theopeptos (Nicosia constituency): <https://theopemptou.com/info/index.php/parlmnu/questions18/coastal18>

# References

1. Inter-Parliamentary Union (2007). Tools for Parliamentary oversight
2. Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations Development Programme (2017). Global Parliamentary Report 2017
3. United Nations Development Programme (2017). Parliament's role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals
4. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2022). Action kit: engaging parliaments in gender responsive budgeting.
5. United Nations Environment Programme (2006). Manual on compliance with and enforcement of Multilateral Environmental Agreements
6. United Nations Environment Programme (2010). Auditing the implementation of MEAs: A primer for auditors
7. United Nations Environment Programme (2019). Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and its Protocols
8. United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan and Plan Bleu (2020). State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean (SoED) Report and SoED Key Messages
9. United Nations Environment Programme and Global Legislators Organisation for a Balanced Environment (March 2018). Environmental law-making and oversight for sustainable development: A guide for legislators.





**Mediterranean  
Action Plan**  
Barcelona  
Convention

For more information:  
United Nations Environment Programme / Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan  
Barcelona Convention Secretariat

[unep.org/unepmap](http://unep.org/unepmap)