

# CONSERVING MEDITERRANEAN BIODIVERSITY THROUGH THE BARCELONA CONVENTION

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## Mediterranean biodiversity needs urgent protection

*Despite being one of the richest regions in terms of specific biodiversity, the Mediterranean basin is one of the most vulnerable regions to the combined effects of anthropogenic pressures and decades of unsustainable use of marine and coastal resources. Because of its geographical situation it also suffers most from the impacts of climate change, with temperatures warming 20% faster than the global average.*

*Urgent action is needed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and to address climate change impacts so that Mediterranean “marine and coastal biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy Mediterranean Sea and coast, and delivering benefits essential for nature and people”.*

This is the vision for 2050 of the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (**Post-2020 SAPBIO**), which is the region's strategic blueprint to tackle biodiversity loss under the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, or **Barcelona Convention**, signed in 1976 and amended in 1995.

The Barcelona Convention is supported by seven protocols, among which the **Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol)**, that is implemented by the Mediterranean countries with the assistance of the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (**SPA/RAC**).

# SPA/RAC: the marine biodiversity centre at the service of the mediterranean countries

The Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) was established in Tunis in 1985, by decision of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. It is a Component of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) and acts in synergy with 5 other thematic centres and the MED POL programme, under the supervision of a

Coordinating Unit, based in Athens, to facilitate the implementation of the Barcelona Convention - the MAP legal framework, and its Protocols. SPA/RAC was entrusted with the responsibility of assisting the Contracting Parties to implement the SPA/BD Protocol, adopted in 1995 and entered into force in 1999.

## Six areas of intervention

SPA/RAC has spent the last almost 40 years supporting and assisting the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to conserve Mediterranean marine biodiversity by focusing on **6 areas** of intervention:

**1 Improving knowledge on threatened species and ecosystems, and mapping habitats** with the aim to identify threatened and endangered species as well as the most important sites for marine and coastal biodiversity;

**2 Analysing biodiversity threats and coordinating regional programmes** to mitigate their impacts;

**3 Implementing the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean (IMAP)** to evaluate the biodiversity conservation status and set the appropriate environmental policies according to the EcAp (Ecosystem Approach) principles;

**4 Supporting the creation and management of marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs)**, including Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs);

**5 Increasing capacity for MPA management, monitoring, and observation and forecasting tools;**

**6 and Promoting and facilitating communication, education, and public awareness on marine and coastal biodiversity.**



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# the Post-2020 SAPBIO as strategic blueprint for biodiversity conservation

The **Barcelona Convention** is the only regional multilateral legal framework setting the obligations “to prevent, abate, combat and to the fullest extent possible 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”.

Forming part of the Barcelona Convention is the **Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol)**, which aims at strengthening the efforts of the Contracting Parties to protect, preserve and manage in a sustainable and environmentally sound way threatened or endangered species of flora and fauna as well as areas of particular natural or cultural value, notably by the establishment of specially protected areas. It calls Parties to adopt strategies, plans and programmes for the conservation of biological diversity.

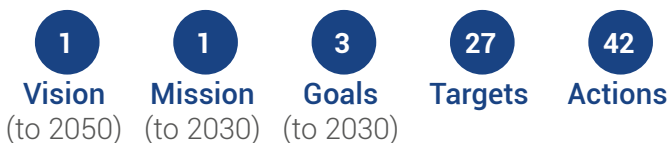
Following its entry into force in 1999, the protocol is driven by a **concerted strategy for marine biodiversity conservation**, the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological

Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (**SAPBIO**), adopted by Parties to the Barcelona Convention in 2003. Based on the evaluation of the SAPBIO in 2018, in 2019 the Barcelona Convention COP 21 requested to prepare a Post-2020 SAPBIO to be harmonised with the Convention on Biological Diversity Post-2020 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (CBD/GBF) and aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Following a **participative regional process** involving all Parties to the Barcelona Convention, the Post-2020 SAPBIO **was adopted in December 2021** as an overall umbrella of all thematic strategies and action plans adopted in the framework of the SPA/BD Protocol, including the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean, and the regional action plans for the conservation of endangered species and vulnerable habitats. Following its adoption, the focus is now on the **implementation** of the action-oriented Post-2020 SAPBIO.

## A set of action-oriented solutions

The Vision to 2050 of the Post-2020 SAPBIO, mentioned above, is adapting the Post-2020 CBD/GBF to the Mediterranean context. It is guided by a Mission, **“By 2030 start to reverse the loss of biodiversity and put the Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity on the path to recovery for the benefit of nature and people”**, and follows a similar hierarchy and terminology as the CBD/GBF, which sets the global agenda for biodiversity:



To achieve its mission and vision, the Post-2020 SAPBIO is divided into three Goals:

- **Goal 1:** Reduce the threats to biodiversity;
- **Goal 2:** Ensure that biodiversity is preserved and maintained or enhanced in order to meet people's needs; and

- **Goal 3:** Enable the necessary transformative change, putting in place tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming.

Each goal has a set of **Targets** which seek to address the accessible, direct drivers of biodiversity loss, with associated **Actions** aiming to be ambitious and transformational, but also realistic, relevant, focused, and timely to achieve the Targets. The Post-2020 SAPBIO indicates scientifically based, and concise realistic goals and targets to achieve at the regional level and integrates the priority actions identified at the national and sub-regional levels. It also proposes the actions needed at the regional level to support, accompany, and coordinate the implementation of the priority actions to be implemented by the countries at the national level.



# SPA/RAC & a new SAPBIO building on previous successes in the region

In **almost 40 years of action** to conserve biodiversity in the Mediterranean, SPA/RAC has worked with regional partners to provide **financial and technical support** to Contracting Parties, contributing to many achievements. SPA/RAC operates across multiple cross-cutting issues including the Ecosystem Approach to the management of human activities, climate change and biodiversity, Capacity Building. SPA/RAC has also implemented numerous regional projects including on Marine Protected Areas and SPAMIs (e.g. MedMPA, MedMPANet, MedMPA Network, Deep-Sea Lebanon, Kuriat, NTZ/MPA, IMAP-MPA, MedABNJ, SPAMI Twinning Programme, ENSERES), and on the conservation and mapping of marine habitats (e.g. MedPosidonia, MedKeyHabitats I & II), the monitoring of biodiversity (EcAp-Med I, II & III, IMAP-MPA). Of these projects, key results were achieved, including: the strengthening and expansion of the network of **Mediterranean MPAs**, the increased

monitoring and awareness of Posidonia seagrass meadows and other **key habitats**, the improvement of scientific knowledge and protection of **deep sea habitats**, the development and strengthening of the management of **Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs)**, the establishment of a strong and collaborative partnership for the **conservation of marine turtles**.

The Post-2020 SAPBIO **Resource Mobilisation Strategy** and its **project proposals** build on previous successes and aim to drive the implementation of the "very high priority actions" identified in the Post-2020 SAPBIO and related to: Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and Other Effective areas-based Conservation Measures (OECMs), Mapping and Restoration of Ecosystems, Marine Turtles and Climate Change, and Transformative Change to reverse biodiversity loss in the Mediterranean.



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## CONTACT

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