

Seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention

Item 8 (c) - Synergies between the Convention and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements and other partners

Statement by Ms. Tatjana Hema, Mediterranean Action Plan Coordinator, United Nations Environment Programme and Barcelona Convention Secretariat

Esteemed delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Congratulations on this important anniversary.

As part of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, the Mediterranean Action Plan – Secretariat of the Barcelona Convention translates the global environmental agenda at the regional level, including the universal 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to fulfill the vision of a healthy Mediterranean Sea and coast that underpin sustainable development.

The Mediterranean Basin has one of the most advanced normative frameworks for a Regional Sea management to achieve good environmental status of its sea and coastal zone and promote sustainable development, namely the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, but this normative build-up has outpaced enforcement and compliance at the national level.

The creation of the Compliance Committee in 2008 reflects the firm commitment of the 22 Contracting Parties to achieve implementation of and compliance with the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

Collaboration with the Compliance Committee of the Aarhus Convention has been significantly strengthened during the last two years.

We look forward to continuing working together, especially since 12 out of the 22 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention are already Parties to the Aarhus Convention.

However, enforcement by Contracting Parties remains challenging due to institutional and capacity gaps. More systematic enforcement instruments, including policy mix and economic instruments should be included in national environmental policies, including public access to information which may urge more compliance by stakeholders.

The collaboration with the UNECE-Aarhus Convention Secretariat should promote and support modernization and digitalization of environmental information systems, making the best use of PRTRs with effective access to environmental information.

Public Participation, Awareness Raising, Education and Information Systems are part of the Mediterranean Action Plan's mandate, as an essential dimension of environmental protection.

Our objective is to inform the public on the state of the environment and development with a view to enhancing awareness of how human activities affect natural systems.

By facilitating access to science and ensuring the participation of stakeholders, we strive to harness the power of citizen action in decoupling development from the destruction of marine and coastal environment and nature.

We recognize that the meaningful and inclusive participation of informed citizens in decision-making processes pertaining to environmental affairs is crucial to a post-COVID green recovery.

A flagship initiative of our Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) encourages the accession to and implementation of the Aarhus Convention by Mediterranean countries.

UNEP/MAP Partners from academia and civil society organizations recently launched an innovative project, supported by the EU, to draft a “Mediterranean Accession Agenda” to the Aarhus Convention.

A discussion document has been prepared and will be discussed during a regional workshop in 2022, gathering representatives from both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

UNEP/MAP also supports Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), as a strategic tool to make peace with nature and achieve the SDGs in the Mediterranean and beyond.

The Mediterranean is the first region in the world to develop a regional Strategy for ESD to enhance public awareness and promote sustainability and the implementation of the SDGs in the Mediterranean.

The Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference will be held in a Mediterranean country, namely Cyprus, which has a very active role with the Mediterranean Committee on ESD; we at UNEP/MAP stand ready to contribute to the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries to be held in Nicosia on the same occasion.

The next Conference of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 22) due to take place in Antalya, Turkey, in December 2021, will examine a set of new anti-pollution, pro-sustainability regional plans and decisions for adoption.

COP 22 will serve as a regional forum for a high-level policy dialogue on flicking the green switch in the Mediterranean.

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention will examine the UNEP-MAP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2027, which includes an innovative Enabling programme for informed and consistent advocacy, awareness, education and communication.

You can count on us at the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat to advance the agenda on access to information and public participation in decision-making on environmental matters in the Mediterranean region and its Contracting Parties.

Thank you.
