

Third Meeting of the Ad hoc Open-ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics
Bangkok, Thailand, 18–22 November 2019

Statement by Gaetano Leone, Coordinator, UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat

- Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this Meeting and present the progress of the work on marine litter in the framework of the MAP-Barcelona Convention. In recent years, marine litter has taken an increasingly central place in our activities, in all three dimensions of the Barcelona Convention context: institutional, regulatory, and implementation related.
- Firstly, at the institutional level: the attention and action by Contracting Parties, Secretariat and Regional Activity Centers, Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSDD), and Stakeholders have increased steadily and significantly. The upcoming COP 21 (Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019) has marine litter as one of its central themes and as the subject of relevant draft decisions and of the Ministerial Declaration to be issued on that occasion.
- Secondly, at the regulatory level: since the '90s, the MAP-Barcelona Convention system includes legally-binding Protocols of direct relevance to the work on marine litter, namely the Prevention and Emergency Protocol, the Offshore Protocol, and the Land-Based Sources of Pollution Protocol. In 2013, the Contracting Parties adopted a legally-binding *Mediterranean Regional Plan for Marine Litter Management*, which is going to be evaluated and eventually revised starting in the next biennium, to adjust it in accordance with the developments and lessons learned during the 6 years since its adoption.
- Thirdly, at the implementation level: we have benefitted from a successful political and resource mobilization campaign during the past 4-5 years. The *Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme* is now a reality, including formally agreed indicators on marine litter; 19 Contracting Parties have developed National Action Plans/Programmes of Measures, in several cases supported by the MAP system and all reviewed by the COP; support has been provided upon request to Contracting Parties among the 17 that have introduced regulations on single-use plastics and the 8 that have done so on recycling; we have completed or are supporting 20 pilot projects through which lessons have been learned and capacities built; tools and guidelines for a harmonized approach to responses have been developed on issues such as "adopt-a-Beach", "Fishing for Litter" and "Port Reception Facilities"; technical assistance has been delivered; and cooperation with important stakeholders enhanced, for instance through the establishment and work of the *Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter in the Mediterranean* and agreements with the the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) among others; finally, awareness, visibility and mobilization of actors have been heightened, through engagement with the G7 and G20 processes, several global Ocean Conferences, regional processes such as those in the EU framework, and industry associations.
- Finally, I wish to share some considerations that are valid for all Regional Sea Conventions and Programmes: the regional dimension is crucial for the development and implementation of responses to marine litter challenges. This is true because real integration of approaches happens within the framework of Regional Sea Conventions and Programmes, whose mandates generally encompass all aspects of marine and coastal ecosystems, including socio-economic ones. Regional Seas are also mechanisms that support the enforcement of global and regional commitments (e.g.: MoU between UNEP/MAP and the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions). Finally, cooperation among Regional Seas around shared issues of marine litter is proving productive and deserves support and recognition, (e.g.: the process that for the past 4 years has brought together the Regional Sea Programmes around the European continent: Mediterranean, Baltic, North-East Atlantic and Black Sea).
- Thank you.