



**Mediterranean
Action Plan**
Barcelona
Convention



**MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN (MAP)
REGIONAL MARINE POLLUTION EMERGENCY RESPONSE CENTRE FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA (REMPEC)**

Fourth Meeting of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil
and Gas Group (OFOG) Sub-Group on Environmental
Impact

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Agenda Item 2: Offshore Monitoring Programme – IMAP Common Indicators

Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan, Specific Objective 9 - Establishment of regional offshore monitoring procedures and programme

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Note by the Secretariat

This document provides information on the establishment of the regional offshore monitoring programme within the context of Specific Objective 9 of the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan and the actions to be taken by the Meeting.

Background

1 It is recalled that Article 19 – Monitoring, of the Protocol concerning the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution Resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf and the Seabed and its Subsoil (the “Offshore Protocol”) adopted in 1994 and which entered into force in 2011, stipulates that:

- .1 *The operator shall be required to measure, or to have measured by a qualified entity, expert in the matter, the effects of the activities on the environment in the light of the nature, scope, duration and technical methods employed in the activities and of the characteristics of the area and to report on them periodically or upon request by the competent authority for the purpose of an evaluation by such competent authority according to a procedure established by the competent authority in its authorization system.*
- .2 *The competent authority shall establish, where appropriate, a national monitoring system in order to be in a position to monitor regularly the installations and the impact of the activities on the environment, so as to ensure that the conditions attached to the grant of the authorization are being fulfilled.*

2 It is also recalled that during the Nineteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (“the Barcelona Convention”) and its Protocols, the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan (MOAP), was also adopted. It provides for the achievement of 10 Specific Objectives, structured around four main components, namely (i) Governance Framework; (ii) Regional Offshore Standards and Guidelines; (iii) Monitoring and (iv) Reporting.

3 One of these objectives - Specific Objective 9 - defines that “The Offshore monitoring programme will be developed in line with the Ecosystem Approach Process (EcAp) Roadmap and, in particular, with the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme” (IMAP). Furthermore, the expected outputs, relating to the Contracting Parties (CPs), are:

- .1 A regional monitoring programme for offshore activities building, inter alia, on the IMAP; and
- .2 Results of the national offshore monitoring programme and the related agreed data are reported to the Secretariat every two years.

4 It is further recalled that the First OFOG Meeting of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (OFOG) Sub-Group on Environmental Impact, considered an initial list of twenty-seven (27) Common Indicators (CIs), together with methodological guidance for monitoring, minimum requirements for the establishment of a National Offshore Monitoring Inspection Programme and related draft guidance fact sheets. The Meeting selected nineteen (19) Indicators for further review by the CPs.

5 During the Second OFOG Meeting held in Athens, Greece, 27-28 June 2019, while reviewing the rationale for the Guidelines for the Conduct of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) , it was advised to reduce the initial set of nineteen (19) Indicators to eight (8) CIs directly relevant to the potential impact and effects of oil and gas operations. No decision was taken by the said Meeting, hence the present submission to discuss the proposed eight (8) CIs to be monitored as part of the Offshore Protocol are set out at Annex to the present document.

6 In this context, a process to validate the CIs to be monitored is expected as a milestone for the future activities related to the Specific Objective 9 of the MOAP. The following activities defined in the Comprehensive Plan of Actions for the biennium 2022-2023, under the Specific Objective 9, will benefit from this validation:

- .1 Reporting of the national offshore monitoring programme and the related agreed data to the Secretariat every two years;
- .2 Development/adoption of a Mediterranean Monitoring Procedures and Programmes for the above, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, building on the relevant work undertaken in the Monitoring Correspondence Groups in the EcAp process; and
- .3 Production, dissemination and publication, every two years of a report on Discharges, Spills and Emissions from Offshore Oil and Gas Installations, based on data submitted by countries which should be used as a base for the State of Environment Report regarding the impacts of the offshore oil and gas industry.

7 Against this background, it should be noted that, with the exception of the CI 19 which is under review, each IMAP CI, Guidance Factsheet and sets of Data Standards/Data Dictionaries (DS/DD) have been endorsed by CPs in the context of the implementation of the EcAp, in order to assess the status of the Mediterranean Sea and coast. The Guidance Factsheets and the DS/DD of the proposed IMAP CIs to be monitored as part of the Offshore Protocol are laid down in the Information document (REMPEC/WG.55/INF.3); and (REMPEC/WG.55/INF.4), respectively.

Actions requested by the Meeting

8 The Meeting is invited to:

- .1 take note of the information provided;
- .2 take action as appropriate;
- .3 approve the list of Common Indicators to be monitored under the Offshore Protocol set out at Annex; and
- .4 take any additional action as appropriate.

Annex

Proposed list of IMAP Common indicators to be monitored as part of the Offshore Protocol

Proposed list of IMAP Common indicators to be monitored as part of the Offshore Protocol

- 1 The eight (8) IMAP Common Indicators (CIs) under consideration are the following:
 - .1 Common Indicator 1: Habitat distributional range, to also consider habitat extent as a relevant attribute (EO1);
 - .2 Common Indicator 2: Condition of the habitat's typical species and communities (EO1);
 - .3 Common Indicator 15: Location and extent of the habitats impacted directly by hydrographic alterations (EO7);
 - .4 Common Indicator 17: Concentration of key harmful contaminants measured in the relevant matrix (EO9, related to biota, sediment, seawater);
 - .5 Common Indicator 18: Level of pollution effects of key contaminants where a cause and effect relationship has been established (EO9);
 - .6 Common Indicator 19: Occurrence, origin (where possible), and extent of acute pollution events (e.g., slicks from oil, oil products and hazardous substances) and their impact on biota affected by this pollution (EO9);
 - .7 Candidate Indicator¹ 26: Proportion of days and geographical distribution where loud, low, and mid-frequency impulsive sounds exceed levels that are likely to entail significant impact on marine animals (EO11);
 - .8 Candidate Indicator 27: Levels of continuous low frequency sounds with the use of models as appropriate (EO11).
- 2 The CIs 1, 2, 15, 17 and 18 are the key monitoring indicators for the oil and gas industry, and it is advised to focus the main monitoring effort on these five (5) indicators.
- 3 In regards to CIs 1, 2, 15, 17 and 18, it is further advised to limit monitoring parameters to be monitored by oil and gas operators to seabed sediment data (grain size, color and texture; potential metal/organic contaminants; biota numbers and species for community structure analysis). The monitoring must cover sufficient sampling locations over the full area of potential zone of impact in order to provide a statistical representation of the baseline conditions in the area, as well as from sampling locations further afield for use as points of regional reference. Further guidance on monitoring surveys in Chapter 5 of Output 3: Common offshore standards and guidelines on the disposal of oil and oily mixtures, the use and disposal of drilling fluids and cuttings and analytical measurements.
- 4 CI 15 should be mapped as part of the Marine Environment Baseline Survey (MEBS) and subsequently be monitored on regular intervals, depending on location, and before any changes to the development (e.g., installation of new subsea infrastructure, such as pipelines).
- 5 CI 17 should also focus on seabed parameters and only use sedentary species living in the local seabed (benthos) and on the offshore installation itself (e.g., mussels on platform legs or in cages), as these can be directly linked to a specific installation.

¹ Candidate Indicators are indicators which still have many outstanding issues regarding their monitoring and assessment and therefore are recommended to be monitored in the initial phase of IMAP on a pilot and voluntary basis. Furthermore, in regards to the Candidate Indicators, the scientific knowledge and related information available are generally not yet fully developed to allow for regional monitoring and assessment.

6 CI 19 relates to unplanned or accidental pollution events, and these should be monitored, on a case by case basis, when such events occur.

7 The monitoring effort of Candidate Indicators 26 and 27 should focus on the low frequency sound produced during the acquisition of certain geophysical data, such as seismic surveys. Other activities that may produce low frequency sound are piling operations during platform installation, and the use of explosives during decommissioning.
