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

Regional Expert Meeting on the Possible Designation of the
Mediterranean, as a whole, as a Nitrogen Oxides Emission
Control Area (Med NO_x ECA), pursuant to MARPOL
Annex VI

REMPEC/WG.62/6
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Agenda Item 6: Examining the possibility of designating the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as NO_x ECA, pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI

Draft Roadmap for the Possible designation of the Mediterranean as a Nitrogen Oxides Emission Control Area (Med NO_x ECA)

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Note by the Secretariat

This document, prepared by the Secretariat, presents an overview of the work undertaken by the MAP NO_x ECA Technical Committee of Experts (NECA TCE) and the latest draft Roadmap for the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area (ECA) for Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x) (the “Med NO_x ECA”).

Background

1. Through Decision IG.25/16 on the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) adopted by 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols (COP 22), the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (CPs) agreed to explore the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area (ECA) for Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x) (the “Med NO_x ECA”) pursuant to Annex VI to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), within the framework of the Barcelona Convention, and to call for coordinated regional and international efforts to that effect.
2. Moreover, through Decision IG.25/14 on the Designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides (Med SO_x ECA) pursuant to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) Annex VI adopted by COP 22, the CPs encouraged UNEP/MAP, under the coordination of REMPEC, to progress on exploring the feasibility of the Med NO_x ECA, including health and socio-economic impacts on the individual CPs.
3. The Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Malta, 13-15 June 2023), requested the Secretariat to establish the MAP NO_x ECA Technical Committee of Experts (NECA TCE) nominated by the CPs with a view to developing and validating the Terms of Reference for a specific Technical and Feasibility Study to assess the relevant existing and on-going studies as well as gather further knowledge on the possible designation of the Med NO_x ECA.
4. Furthermore, the Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC also requested the Secretariat to prepare the Technical and Feasibility Study to examine the possibility of designating the Med NO_x ECA pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI under the guidance of the NECA TCE, together with the related roadmap, during the biennium 2024-2025, for consideration by the Sixteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC to be held in 2025.
5. COP 23 agreed to include the following deliverable in the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget for 2024-2025:
 - 1.4.2.c) Technical and Feasibility Study to examine the possibility of designating the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Nitrogen Oxides (Med NO_x ECA) under MARPOL Annex VI prepared under the guidance of the MAP NO_x ECA Technical Committee of Experts; related roadmap prepared.
6. In this context, REMPEC established the NECA TCE on 24 November 2023 and requested all CPs to nominate their representatives to serve on the said Committee. The Detailed Technical and Feasibility Study to assess the relevant existing and ongoing studies, as well as to examine the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Nitrogen Oxides, pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI, including health and socio-economic impacts on the Mediterranean region and the individual Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, hereinafter referred to as the Final draft Technical and Feasibility Study, was prepared by REMPEC, in close consultation with the NECA TCE. Various consultations were undertaken during 2025, leading to the Final draft Technical and Feasibility Study, in August 2025.
7. The Report of the NECA TCE is presented in the Appendix to document REMPEC/WG.62/INF.3, and the Final draft Technical and Feasibility Study is presented in the Appendix to document REMPEC/WG.62/INF.4.

Continued assistance for the ratification and effective implementation of MARPOL Annex VI

8. During the last biennium, assistance for the ratification and effective implementation of MARPOL Annex VI has been provided by REMPEC to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, which have so requested, through activities financed by the Mediterranean Trust Fund (MTF), Voluntary Financial Contributions and the IMO's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP), during the biennium 2024-2025, in line with the various COP requests.

Next steps and timeline

9. In this context, and on the basis of the outcome of the NECA TCE, as referred to in paragraph 6 above, the Secretariat proposes to review in detail the draft Technical and Feasibility Study, together with the revised draft recommendations, including draft Roadmap for the Possible designation of the Mediterranean as a Med NO_x ECA, as set out in the Appendix to document REMPEC/WG.62/INF.4, as a basis for the development of a joint and coordinated proposal for the designation of the proposed Med NO_x ECA to the IMO.

Actions requested by the Meeting

10. **The Meeting is invited to:**

- .1 take note of the information presented in the present document;
- .2 consider and endorse the Report of the NECA TCE, as set out in document REMPEC/WG.62/INF.3;
- .3 consider the final draft Technical and Feasibility Study, as set out in document REMPEC/WG.62/INF.4;
- .4 examine and discuss the draft Roadmap towards the possible Med NO_x ECA designation, as set out in the Annex to the present document, particularly the timelines contained therein, taking into account the feedback provided under Phase 3c and Phase 4 of the NECA TCE; and
- .5 make recommendations to the Seventeenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC to be tentatively held in May 2027, as appropriate.

Annex

**Draft Roadmap for the Possible designation of the Mediterranean as a Nitrogen Oxides
Emission Control Area (Med NO_x ECA)**

Draft Roadmap towards the designation of a Med NO_x ECA

Milestones	Dates	Actions
Regional actions (2025-2027)		
Technical and Feasibility Study	January-December 2025	Completion of a study to address the criteria and procedures for designation of emission control areas laid down in Appendix III to MARPOL Annex VI (this Study) and a draft Roadmap outlining the process leading to a potential proposal to designate the Mediterranean Sea.
Regional Expert Meeting on the possible designation of the Med NO _x ECA pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI	18-19 November 2025	Presentation of the results of the Study and discussion on the submission process for a potential proposal to designate the Med NO _x ECA under MARPOL Annex VI.
Submission of draft IMO proposal to Focal Points of REMPEC	April 2027 <i>Q2 2027 (TBC)</i>	Submission of a Note by the Secretariat (REMPEC), including draft IMO submission and the draft Roadmap, to the 17 th (TBC) Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC.
Review and consideration by Focal Points of REMPEC <i>17th (TBC) Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC</i>	May 2027 <i>Q2 2027 (TBC)</i>	Review and consideration of the Note by the Secretariat (REMPEC), including draft IMO submission and the draft Roadmap. Discussion on: • whether or not to submit a proposal to IMO for the designation of the proposed Med NO_x ECA, • the most appropriate timing for such a submission, if any, and • the effective date of entry into force of the proposed Med NO_x ECA, if any.
Submission of draft IMO proposal to MAP Focal Points	July 2027 (TBC) <i>Q3 2027</i>	Submission of a draft COP Decision on the joint and coordinated proposal for the designation of the proposed Med NO _x ECA and the Roadmap to the IMO to the Meeting of the MAP Focal Points. <i>Subject to agreement being reached at the 17th (TBC) Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC.</i>
Endorsement of ECA proposal by MAP Focal Points <i>Meeting of MAP Focal Points</i>	September 2027 (TBC) <i>Q3 2027</i>	Approval of the draft COP Decision on the joint and coordinated proposal for the designation of the proposed Med NO _x ECA and the Roadmap towards its designation to the IMO.

Submission of draft IMO proposal to Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols	October 2027 (TBC) <i>Q4 2027</i>	Submission of draft COP Decision on the joint and coordinated proposal for the designation of the proposed Med NO _x ECA and the Roadmap towards its designation to the IMO to COP 25 (TBC). <i>Subject to agreement being reached at the Meeting of the MAP Focal Points.</i>
Endorsement of ECA proposal by Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols <i>25th (TBC) Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 25, TBC)</i>	December 2027 (TBC) <i>Q4 2027</i>	Adoption of COP Decision on the joint and coordinated proposal for the designation of the proposed Med NO _x ECA and the Roadmap towards its designation to the IMO.
Global actions (beyond 2027)		
Submission of the proposal to the IMO	Winter 2028 <i>Q1 2028 (TBC)</i>	Submission of the joint and coordinated proposal for the designation of the proposed Med NO _x ECA to the IMO. This will include a proposed amendment to MARPOL Annex VI. <i>Subject to agreement being reached at COP 25 (TBC).</i>
Presentation and review of the proposal <i>87th (TBC) session of the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 87)</i>	Spring 2028 <i>Q2 2028 (TBC)</i>	• Presentation of the joint and coordinated proposal for the designation of the proposed Med NO_x ECA to the IMO, together with a proposed amendment to MARPOL Annex VI); • Assessment of and, agreement to, the said proposal, if any; and • Consideration and approval of a draft amendment to regulation 13 of MARPOL Annex VI related to the designation of the proposed Med NO_x ECA, if any, and request to the IMO Secretary-General to circulate it in accordance with article 16(2) of MARPOL, with a view to adoption at the next session of the IMO's MEPC, if any.

Circulation of the draft amendment to regulation 13 of MARPOL Annex VI	Spring 2028 <i>Q2 2028</i> (TBC)	Circulation of the draft amendment to regulation 13 of MARPOL Annex VI related to the designation of the proposed Med NO _x ECA by the IMO Secretary General to all Members of the Organisation and all Parties, <i>at least six months prior to its consideration.</i> (Provided agreement was reached at MEPC 87 [TBC])
Adoption of the draft amendment regulation 13 of MARPOL Annex VI <i>88th (TBC) session of the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 88)</i>	Autum 2028 <i>Q4 2028</i> (TBC)	• Consideration and adoption of the draft amendment to regulation 13 of MARPOL Annex VI related to the designation of the proposed Med NO_x ECA, if any; and • Determination of the date of bringing into force of the amendment to regulation 13 of MARPOL Annex VI related to the designation of the proposed Med NO_x ECA, if any, in accordance with article 16(2)(f)(iii) of MARPOL.
Acceptance of the amendment to regulation 13 of MARPOL Annex VI	Summer 2029 <i>Q2 2029</i> (TBC)	Deemed acceptance of the amendment to regulation 13 of MARPOL Annex VI related to the designation of the proposed Med NO _x ECA, if any. In accordance with article 16(2)(f)(iii) of MARPOL: <i>period shall be <u>not less than ten months</u>.</i>
Entry into force of the amendment to regulation 13 of MARPOL Annex VI	Autum 2029 <i>Q4 2029</i> (TBC)	Bringing into force of the amendment to regulation 13 of MARPOL Annex VI related to the designation of the proposed Med NO _x ECA, if any. In accordance with article 16(2)(g)(ii) of MARPOL: <i><u>six months after its acceptance.</u></i>
Entry into force of the Med NO _x ECA	TBC <i>(earliest Q4 2029)</i>	Effective entry into force of the Med NO _x ECA, if any.

Notes: Meetings of Contracting Parties (COPs) to the Barcelona Convention; Meeting of Focal Points for UNEP/MAP (United Nations Environment Programme's Mediterranean Action Plan)