

## Regional cooperation

**176.** The Barcelona Convention, adopted in 1976, was the first legally binding instrument for the environmental protection of the Mediterranean Sea. Its provisions and thematic protocols provided the legal basis for the progressive development of a wide framework for regional cooperation to which the Mediterranean countries and the European Union adhered.

**177.** In addition to its legal texts, the Barcelona Convention system has other consultation and cooperation frameworks adopted by the Contracting Parties to assist them and coordinate their efforts in implementing the Convention and its Protocols.

**178.** The Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD): The MCSD is an advisory body to the Contracting Parties aimed at assisting them in their efforts to integrate environmental issues in their socioeconomic programmes and to promote sustainable development policies in the Mediterranean region and countries. Serving as a forum for experience sharing and peer learning, the MCSD is unique in its composition since it includes not only government representatives but also local authorities, socio-economic actors, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, the scientific community and parliamentarians. All the Commission members participate in its deliberations on an equal footing.

**179.** The Contracting Parties also adopted a series of legislations, national and regional strategies and action plans aimed at guiding their efforts in addressing issue of relevance for the objectives of the Convention and its Protocols. These regional strategies and action plans offer various opportunities for cooperation, exchange of experience and mutual assistance among the Contracting Parties and for partnership with other Inter-Governmental organizations as well as with a wide range of civil society and non-governmental organisations.

**180.** Promoting partnership and cooperation with relevant regional and global institutions and actors is among the key guiding principles followed by the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) Coordinating Unit and the Regional Activity Centres. Over the years, they have sought to foster existing partnerships and to enter into new ones in line with the priorities set by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. In this context, the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit has a long-standing cooperation with a number of key regional and international organizations, and with many of them put in place Memoranda of Understanding and/or follows other cooperation modalities:

- Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS)
- Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM)
- Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions
- European Environment Agency (EEA)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)
- Global Environment Facility (GEF)
- International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
- International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- London Convention and Protocol
- London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter
- OSPAR Commission
- Permanent Secretariat of the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (BSC PS)
- UNEP Regional Seas programme
- Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)
- United National Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- World Bank

**181.** During the period between the 2017 and 2023 MED QSRs a clear improvement is recorded in the coordination between regional organizations operating in the Mediterranean in relation to the preservation of the marine environment and the sustainable use of its biodiversity and living resources. Within this framework, memoranda of collaboration have been established between organizations with a view to promoting consultation and harmonization of activities to avoid duplication and to increase the complementarity of their intervention. In addition, projects involving several regional organizations have been implemented thanks to financial support provided by intergovernmental donors and private foundations. Such projects concerned various important issues for the marine environment of the Mediterranean such as marine litter, marine underwater noise, incidental catches of vulnerable species, habitat preservation and endangered species.