



ISPRA

Istituto Superiore per la Protezione
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**UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN**

**REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**

UNEP/MAP - INFO/RAC

DRAFT MANDATE

to be presented at the

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Draft Mandate of the UNEP/MAP - INFO/RAC Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication

1. Background

The Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication (INFO/RAC) was established in 2003 by the decision of the 13th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention held in Catania, when the refocusing of the Italian Centre ERS/RAC towards ICTs was approved. The Environment Remote Sensing Regional Activity Centre (ERS/RAC) hosted by Italy, was previously established by the “8th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention” (Antalya, Turkey, 12-15 October 1993). In Catania, the Italian Government entrusted the management and the responsibility of the Centre to the Italian Ministry of the Environment, Territory and Sea as well as to the Sicilian Region; the Centre is therefore entirely in public hands.

In line with Article 15 of the Barcelona Convention, the scope of the Centre has been to optimise information and communication technology and train operators.

At the 14th Ordinary Meeting of the CP to the BC, held in Portoroz on November 2005, the Centre was mandated *inter alia* to establish a common information management infrastructure (Info MAP) to facilitate and support information and communication activities across MAP, including the management and upgrading of the UNEP/MAP website, the MED POL Info System and the MAP reporting system, as well as information and communication activities related to the MSSD.

At the 15th COP of the Barcelona Convention (Almeria, 15-18 January 2008), the Italian Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea (IMELS) announced its decision to transfer the functions of INFO/RAC to ICRAM (Italian Central Institute for Applied Marine Research), now merged into ISPRA (Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research)¹, starting from January 2010.

2. Objective and mission statement

Support the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, the Mediterranean Action Plan and the Mediterranean Strategy on Sustainable Development (MSSD), in the achievement of their objectives, through the provision of Information and Communication services, the dissemination and sharing of environmental information and the strengthening of the communication capabilities of UNEP/MAP and of the key stakeholders in the Mediterranean region, in order to raise public awareness, assist decision-making processes and promote sustainable development and environmental protection in the Mediterranean basin.

¹ ISPRA is the governmental body performing environmental technical and scientific activities under the vigilance of IMELS and has a wide experience in managing environmental information and communication systems, as well as in bilateral and regional cooperation capacity building activities in the Mediterranean at scientific and operational levels.

ISPRA, established by Italian Law 133/2008 art. 28 (published in the Official Journal n. 195, August 21st 2008) performs the functions, with the inherent tools, financial and human resources, of these three former institutions: APAT (Agency for Environmental Protection and Technical Services); ICRAM (Central Institute for Applied Marine Research) and INFS (Italian Wildlife Institute).

3. Scope of action and key issues

The main objectives of the Centre are grouped in the following three main thematic areas:

I. Information and communication technology

Design and implement a common infrastructure (*InfoMAP*) for internal (UNEP/MAP) and external information among Mediterranean coastal States to carry out coordinated activities at the national and regional level, for the full implementation of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols and the MSSD. Furthermore, manage and periodically update the UNEP/MAP, MED POL Info System, MSSD websites/CMS/intranet and the MAP Reporting System

II. Reporting, communication, education, training and awareness-raising

Provide knowledge and tools to improve regional cooperation in the field of information and communication, education and training; establish long-term, working partnerships among UNEP/MAP Components, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders; promote public participation and raise awareness on the activities of UNEP/MAP, of the Barcelona Convention and of related programmes on the environmental and sustainable development policies of individual member states of the Convention

III. Dissemination of results from environmental research and from innovative observation and monitoring technology

Promote the sharing and dissemination of experiences and results stemming from environmental research and innovative tools/technologies, including those resulting from earth observation initiatives relevant to the Mediterranean environment and sustainable development. The scope is to strengthen the knowledge base for bridging the gap between science, environmental monitoring and policy making in the Mediterranean region.

INFO/RAC will promote the use of the best available information and communication means and tools for the reduction of the overall ecological footprint of MAP's components, contributing to the greening of the Barcelona Convention, thus contributing to enhance the UNEP/MAP overall visibility.

4. Principal activities

The key elements of INFO/RAC's activities derive from the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, the MSSD and the Reports of the meetings of CPs and of MAP FPs; they include the following:

I. Information and communication technology

- Developing, maintaining and integrating InfoMAP components, including the on-line reporting systems and InfoMAP GeoPortal and websites;
- Providing technical assistance to CPs in on-line reporting activities;
- Promoting networking on Information and Communication technology;
- Reducing MAP ecological footprint through the best use of I&CT;

II. Reporting, communication, education, training and awareness-raising

- Cooperating in MAP environmental and corporate reports, including guidelines for corporate communication;
- Contributing in development of communication products and services, such as MAP websites, MedWaves e-magazine, e-Newsletter, short promo videos;

- Contributing to improving communication and linkages within the Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties, MAP components and with external stakeholders;
- Developing a network of Communication officers within the CPs;
- Preparing periodical survey on IC needs and communication impacts;
- Organising MAP events such as events targeted to young people at COPs, celebration days and on-line contest;
- Participating in activities related to environmental education, through the use of best available IC tools and information resources;
- Improving communication with civil society and private sector including exchange of information on best practices regarding educational toolkits;
- Facilitating partnerships with NGOs and other actors concerned with promoting public participation and raising awareness of the objectives and activities of MAP and the Barcelona Convention;

III. Dissemination of results from environmental research and from innovative observation and monitoring technology:

- Identifying opportunities for R&D cooperation initiatives on Marine and coastal environment;
- Collecting and disseminating R&D project results related to Marine and coastal environment;
- Disseminating information on opportunities stemming from innovative earth observation technologies, to facilitate the development of early warning systems on the major environmental challenges in the Mediterranean region.

5. Improving the visibility of MAP

Mainly through the harmonisation of communication products and services delivered by MAP's components, INFO/RAC will contribute substantially to support a consistent UNEP/MAP corporate approach in the development, implementation and monitoring of the MAP Information and Communication strategy, in close cooperation with MAP's components and CPs. Moreover, the Centre will facilitate cooperation and cross-linking with other relevant organisation and initiatives, primarily the other UN Conventions.

6. Sources and mechanisms of funding

The INFO/RAC activities are primarily financed by the Italian Government, through the Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea, subject to the national budgetary rules, as well as from the Mediterranean Trust Fund. ISPRA also provides in-kind contribution to the INFO/RAC programmes. Other sources of funding will be identified and sought at the European and International level, including private sector and sponsorships, as appropriate.