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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: 21st meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 21) (Naples, 2-5 December 2019)
- Information from the Presidency and the Commission

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Presidency and the Commission on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 19 December 2019.

**21st meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 21)
(Naples, 2-5 December 2019)**

- Information from the Presidency and the Commission -

The conference attracted more than 300 participants representing Parties to the Convention as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental observer organisations and media. The European Union participated as a party in its own right alongside the eight Member States, which are Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, and the Finnish Presidency.

The conference was well-managed and organized with a very rich agenda. The Italian host presided over the meeting and took over the presidency of the Convention for the next biennium. Turkey offered to host COP 22 in Antalya in 2021.

The adoption of the *Road Map for the Possible Designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides Pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI*, within the Framework of the Barcelona Convention was a very important outcome of the COP in which all the Contracting Parties committed to presenting a submission to the International Maritime Organisation by 2022 for the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, based on the outcome of the preparatory work.

The important political outcome of the COP 21 was the adoption of the Naples Declaration, which reflects the adopted decisions. The Commission was authorised to support the adoption of this declaration on behalf of the European Union on matters falling within Union competence. The amendments to the draft during the meeting of the Contracting Parties were considered and agreed through coordination on the spot.

The agenda also resulted in the adoption of a number of important thematic decisions.¹

¹ The adopted decisions concern: *Implementation, Monitoring and Mid-Term Evaluation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016–2025 and of the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean; Assessment Studies including Status of Environment and Development Report 2019, Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management; Strategies and Action Plans under the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean; elements of Six Regional Plans to Reduce/Prevent Marine Pollution from Land-Based Sources; Development of a Set of Regional Measures to Support the Development of Green and Circular Businesses and to Strengthen the Demand for more Sustainable Products; and Updated Guidelines Regulating the Placement of Artificial Reefs at Sea.*

Among the governance issues discussed, the most prominent ones include evaluation of the current UN Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) Mid-Term Strategy, and the preparation of the new one for 2022-2027, as well as the Operational Communication Strategy and the roadmap for the preparation of a Data Management Policy.

While a Joint Cooperation Strategy² could not be finalised at this COP, the Secretariat was requested to continue strengthening synergies, building on existing work at the relevant levels and fostering cooperation with the objectives to ensure conservation and sustainable use of the marine biodiversity and to report to the Parties at COP 22.

Both the Presidency team (Finland supported by Spain) and the Commission were able to count on the support of other Member States' experts and on the good cooperation shown by all within the EU group.

Speaking and adopting decisions with one united voice ensured strong negotiation power for the EU and its Member States.

The EU and the Member States will now need to implement the decisions and commitments taken at COP 21 in the preparation of the next Mid-Term Strategy 2022 – 2027 through the work of the relevant preparatory bodies. The collective steps in a preparatory process for the submission to the International Maritime Organisation for the Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides will be an important priority.

² Joint Cooperation Strategy on Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity among the Secretariat of United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), Agreement on Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)