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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	22nd Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols – Barcelona Convention (COP 22) (Antalya, 7 - 10 December 2021) - Information from the Presidency and the Commission

Delegations will find in the 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 20 December 2021.

**22nd Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols – Barcelona Convention (COP 22)
(Antalya, 7 - 10 December 2021)**

- Information from the Presidency and the Commission -

The 22nd Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean Sea (Barcelona Convention COP21) took place from 7 to 10 December 2021, in Antalya, Turkey.

The conference attracted over 400 participants, representing Parties to the Convention as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental observer organisations and media. The meeting marked 45 years of regional solidarity and mutual efforts for environmental sustainability. A number of side events also took place in the margins of the COP. The European Union participated in presence, as a party in its own right, alongside the eight Member States, which are Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, and including the Slovenian Presidency.

The conference was well organized, within the limitations and challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and covered an extensive agenda. The Turkish host presided the meeting and took over the Presidency of the Convention for the next biennium. The COP endorsed the candidature of Slovenia for hosting the next COP (COP23) in the year 2023, as well as the candidature of Egypt for hosting COP24 in the year 2025.

The ambitious agenda resulted in the adoption of a number of important thematic decisions¹.

Among the governance issues discussed, the most prominent one concerns the new UN Environment Programme (UNEP)/ Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) Mid-Term Strategy for 2022-2027, which sets out the framework for the development and implementation of the Programme of Work of UNEP/MAP for the next six years. It defines the expected outcomes with respect to the key challenges for the marine environment, in particular marine pollution, biodiversity, pressures on resource management, and climate change.

The other main outcome of COP22 was that the Contracting Parties to the Convention agreed on the text of a coordinated proposal on the designation of the Mediterranean Sea as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides (Med SOX ECA), pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI, and to submit this proposal to the seventy-eighth (78th) session of the International Maritime Organization's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC78) scheduled for 2022, with an ambitious entry into force date.

Also of political importance was the adoption and signature of the Antalya Declaration. The Commission was authorised to support the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on behalf of the European Union on matters falling within Union competence. The proposed amendments to the draft were considered during the meeting of the Contracting Parties, and agreed upon through coordination on the spot.

¹ The adopted decisions concern: Amendments to Annexes I, II and IV to the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol); Amendments to the Annex to the Protocol for the Prevention and Elimination of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft or Incineration at Sea (Dumping Protocol); Amendments to the Annexes to the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution Resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf and the Seabed and its Subsoil (Offshore Protocol); Regional Plans in the framework of Article 15 of the LBS Protocol on Urban Wastewater Treatment and Sewage Sludge Management; Regional Plan in the framework of Article 15 of the LBS Protocol on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean; MAP Data Policy; Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO); Protecting and conserving the Mediterranean through well connected and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, including Specially Protected Areas and Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance; Action Plans for the conservation of species and habitats under the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean; Designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides (MED SOx ECA) pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI; Guidelines for the Conduct of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution Resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf and the Seabed and its Subsoil (Article 23); Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) and its Action Plan; Ballast Water Management Strategy for the Mediterranean Sea (2022-2027); Set of Regional Measures to Support the Development of Green and Circular Businesses and to Strengthen the Demand for more Sustainable Products

The EU and its Member States ensured a strong negotiating position by speaking and adopting decisions with one united voice. Both the Slovenian Presidency 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.

The EU and the Member States will now need to implement the decisions and commitments taken at COP 22, notably under the new Mid-Term Strategy 2022 – 27, starting from the Programme of Work and Budget 2022-23. Coordination with the Member States has already started for the preparation of the submission to the International Maritime Organisation for the designation of the Mediterranean Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides.
