This document constitutes the 2023 Final Declaration of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission approved by its General Assembly in Calabria (Italy) on 29-30 June 2023.

In a year full of major events such as the humanitarian, economic and energy crisis resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the drought and extreme weather events that threaten the Mediterranean and its catastrophic impacts on environmental and food ecosystems, and geopolitical tensions among others, the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission calls for a reflection for the present and future of the Mediterranean.

This Declaration is based on an analysis of the main events occurred since the last 2022 General Assembly in Sevilla, the joint work carried out by the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission, its Member Regions and partners as well as the common challenges ahead.

In 15 key points, it aims to identify the key priorities for this year and advocate for a more resilient and cohesive Mediterranean, enhance collaboration with its non-EU Neighbours to achieve common goals in social, economic, and environmental fields, as well as to achieve an energetic, technological and food sovereignty.
Several events have marked the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023 that make us reflect on the future we want for the Mediterranean region. The health crisis caused by the SARS CoV-2 global pandemic has been followed by an energy and social crisis, induced by rising energy prices mainly due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This situation is exacerbated by the latent climate crisis, which endangers citizens and our societies as well as our economies, impacting key sectors such as agriculture or fisheries, and environmental ecosystems.

Achieving energy sovereignty by making use of innovative infrastructures and renewable energy, ensuring the compatibility of our economies with a sustainable use of resources, mitigating the effects of the climate crisis by reducing CO₂ emissions and adequately protect and restore nature, without compromising food security, guaranteeing the sustainability and inclusivity of digitalisation and strengthening digital skills, ensuring that all citizens have access to basic services, weaving networks from cooperation and peace principles, or building bridges across the Mediterranean shores, are just some of the challenges and opportunities ahead of us. The 2023 Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union could help put the Mediterranean in the spotlight and ensure joint, cooperative work among all regions.

To combat these challenges, multilevel governance is required, with Regional and local authorities playing at the forefront, as they are close to their citizens and have first-hand knowledge of their needs and expectations. Likewise, it is necessary to make a good use of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2021-2027), which despite being under extreme pressure, guarantees a source of economic resources for Regions. In this sense, administrative and legal tasks must be simplified, so that the funds can reach most of the administrations and translate into improvements for territories and their citizens.

Therefore, in such a complex climatic, social, and economic context, it appears necessary to respond to challenges in a cohesive, coordinated, sustainable and solidarity-based manner, to make the Mediterranean of the future even better.

The CPMR Intermediterranean Commission, addressing European, Mediterranean, and international institutions, as well as national and sub-state entities and stakeholders in the Mediterranean, hereby:

1. **Welcomes** the latest institutional pronouncements favourable to the creation of a Mediterranean macro-regional strategy¹ and **calls on** the 2023 Spanish Presidency of the EU Council and the rest of EU Member States to provoke a decision on the creation of a macro-regional strategy at the Mediterranean global basin scale.²

   a. **Promotes** the Declaration of the *Friends of the Mediterranean Macro-Region* initiative³, recalling the above principles, led by the Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance with the support of key institutions such as the European Committee of the Regions and the European

¹ Including the *Committee of the Regions Opinion “Towards a Macro-regional Strategy in the Mediterranean”,* COR-2022-02167-00-00-AC-TRA (EN) 1/11; *The Report from The Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of EU Macro-Regional Strategies*, COM/2022/705 final; and the *European Parliament resolution of 9 May 2023 on the role of cohesion policy in addressing multidimensional environmental challenges in the Mediterranean basin, P9_TA(2023)0133*. As part of the institutional pronouncements it is also to be noted the Declaration of the Presidents of the member institutions of the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion “The Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion: spearheading the Macro-Regional Strategy in the Mediterranean.”

² This strategy would be based on a gradual, voluntary, coordinated, integrated and tailor-made approach for territories, including insular ones, following the multi-level governance principle, and with a first action focus placed on the impact of climate change and the necessary and urgent ecological transition. Such a macro-regional strategy for the Mediterranean should be built in co-ownership with non-EU Mediterranean territories and Partners Countries, as it represents an opportunity to deepen and strengthen territorial diplomacy relations across the whole basin, in alignment with the EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy.

³ CPMR Intermediterranean Commission and Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance’s Declaration *“Becoming a Friend of the Mediterranean Macro-Region”* (2023).
Parliament. **Invites**, consistently, any institution, organization or interested private person to join the *Friends of the Mediterranean Macro-Region* initiative by signing its Declaration.

**b. Believes** that the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is a very important vector for EU policies considering at the same time their respective external dimensions and adapting them to specific diplomatic and geopolitical situations. **Recommends** working across the scale of multi-level governance with the increased involvement of Regional and local authorities in the ENP’s design and implementation, which would help better anticipate the impacts of crises while ensuring security, stability and prosperity of the basin. A macro-regional strategy framework would support these interactions.

**c. Strongly supports** the decentralised cooperation actions carried out by the member regions of the Intermediterranean Commission. **Encourages** their involvement in the framework of the next call for projects of the Interreg Next Med Programme and, in particular, in projects dealing with ecological transition.

**2. Believes** that the EUSAIR and WestMED experiences show that there is a clear rationale for an integrated cooperation approach across the Mediterranean basin to give coordinated answers to similar objectives, challenges and solutions. **Welcomes** the progress made in their respective developments and believes that stable cooperation and dialogue should be stronger between them.

**a. Welcomes** the updated 2023 WestMED Ministerial Declaration 4 more focused and adapted to the emerging challenges of the basin, and **highlights** the potential of a future integrated scalability of the initiative over the basin. In this sense, **recalls** that WestMED’s success relies on the collective effort to work together on the part of participating Countries and actors across the scale of multi-level governance as regional and local authorities.

**b. Acknowledges** the revision of the EUSAIR Action plan and the adaptations notably linked to the important role that the youth can play in the development of the Adriatic Ionian region. **Encourages** the Participating countries to further build cooperation with youth and take the opportunity of the Mediterranean Youth Council to foster young leadership and ensure inclusion of issues of importance to youth into the work of the area and the strategy.

**3. Positively acknowledges** the alignment and strengthened cooperation between transnational cooperation programs, notably Interreg Euro-MED, the EUSAIR and WestMED, transversally integrating part of their objectives and activities.

**a. Calls for** provisions designed to encourage relevant programs to take more account of and step up their contribution to the priorities of emerging strategies. The budget earmarked for the European Territorial Cooperation objective in the 2021-2027 period remains too small vis-à-vis macro-regional or sea basin strategies’ expanding priorities.

**b. Asks** for a more ambitious envelope to be agreed during the mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) due by end 2024 to that end.

**4. Welcomes** the first steps taken last May 2023 in the implementation of the Multi-programme Cooperation Mechanism put in place between the Interreg Euro-MED, MARITTIMO and NEXT MED programs, being a good opportunity to concretely demonstrate the benefits of an integrated macro-regional approach for the basin, facilitating processes, creating an ecosystem of networks and better supporting the integration of all the different strategies and initiatives working in the Mediterranean (EUSAIR, EUSALP, WestMED...).

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4 Available in the CPMR IMC Member Area.
5. **Supports** the CPMR Islands Commission in its objective of advancing in the development of an EU Islands Pact,⁵ and **urges** EU institutions to adopt a forward-looking, holistic, and place-based approach to the structural geographical specificities and needs of island territories. The upcoming Spanish Presidency of the EU Council provides a key opportunity to advance in this direction.

6. **Brings forward** the Political Declaration against desertification⁶, and **recalls** that in the context of climate change, the increase in average temperature, as well as a greater irregularity in precipitation, with greater periods of drought, cause a serious affect the availability of water, both for the aquatic ecosystems and biological cycles, as for the socio-economic activities that depend on it. The fight against desertification must be cross-cutting and transversal across communities and sectors (agriculture, water management...). In this sense, **strongly encourages** the use of innovative infrastructures to optimize and lower the costs of water use such as solar irrigation (tested in the solaQua’s H2020 project) or through the development of efficient wastewater treatment plants, the increase of vegetation mass or the extension of carbon farming that would help lower agricultural carbon footprint. The adaptation of all socio-economic sectors by means of the modernisation, research and innovation in the technology of irrigation systems a modernization that pursues the efficient use of resources is key. Notably in water, soil and nature conservation; through behavioural changes and of practices; or the use of regenerated water.

7. **Understands** the Nature Restoration Law (NRL) proposal⁷ as a great opportunity to jointly reflect on the restoration of ecosystems through the scale of multi-level governance. In this sense, regional and local authorities should be thoroughly involved in the elaboration of National Restoration Plans from the early stages on, to ensure coherence with territorial realities and capacities once the implementation phase begins.⁸

8. **Reminds of** the urgency to act on depollution of the Mediterranean Sea⁹, **calling for** a holistic approach tackling the whole hydrosphere¹⁰, recognizing the sea-land interface (well evident with the agricultural soil contamination issue) and following an effective zero pollution hierarchy¹¹.

   a. **Stresses** the essential contribution of EU funds to the implementation of concrete initiatives by Regional authorities (Cohesion Funds – including territorial cooperation programs – and Horizon Europe) and **reiterates its support** to the deployment of the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030 in the Mediterranean basin both through the PREP4BLUE Coordination Support Action (CSA), and the BlueMissionMed project specifically tackling the basin depollution.

   b. **Keeps promoting** the adhesion of Mediterranean regions to the Mission Charter¹² to give visibility to the policies contributing to the Mission deployment and **invites** the European Commission to keep reflecting on the specific needs of and support for Regional authorities.

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⁶ IMC Political Declaration against Desertification, ratified by its members during its Political Bureau of February 2023 in Palma de Mallorca (Spain).


⁸ More details are to be found in the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission’s dedicated political Declaration to be presented for ratification during its 2023 General Assembly in Calabria.


¹⁰ Hydrosphere refers to the connected system of bodies of water such as the ocean, seas, coastal waters, rivers and lakes.

¹¹ As per the EU Action Plan: “Towards a Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil” COM/2021/400 final, the zero pollution hierarchy calls for a prioritization of the prevention over the minimization and control and elimination and remediation actions.

¹² Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters Charter
c. **Recommends** the acceleration of the implementation of pollution control areas in the Mediterranean Sea (SECA-Sulfur Emission Control Area and NECA--Nitrogen Oxid) and the inclusion of other parameters to be controlled\(^\text{13}\).

9. **Is carefully monitoring** the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and Marine Strategy Framework (MSFD) Directives, the proposal on the Nature Restauration Law (NRL), and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) with the aim of identifying the main issues and opportunities for Mediterranean regions associated with their interactions, revisions and implementations.

a. **Calls upon** the European Commission for a Common Fisheries Policy for the Mediterranean with a stronger external dimension, i.e. discussed and ideally agreed with all the countries of this semi-enclosed Sea to ensure more efficiency.\(^\text{14}\)

b. **Insists** on the need to move towards the competitive sustainability of the Mediterranean fisheries sector, for which it is essential to increase the effort to enable a viable energy transition, in which ambition and realism are combined.

c. **Recalls** that even though MSP’s main implementation processes happen at national levels, the involvement of Regional authorities in the design and/or review of National Maritime Spatial Plans (NMSPs) is essential to guarantee coherence and effectiveness, in direct collaboration with international regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs). Likewise, the transboundary dimension of challenges calls for a stronger transboundary dimension of the NMSPs too.

d. **Looks closely** at the MSFD review and **highlights** the strong commitment of Regional authorities in ensuring the restoration, protection, and sustainable exploitation of maritime ecosystems. In this regard, **calls** upon the European Commission and the European Parliament to capitalize on already existing regional initiatives (e.g. co-management of fish stocks, restoration of *Posidonia Oceanica*, actions against maritime pollution, etc.) to integrate the subsequent role coastal and maritime regions already play.

e. **Stresses** the need of improving financial support to allow Regional authorities to multiply their initiatives to restore and protect maritime habitats. In this regard, **stresses** the importance to move through the precautionary principle, while exploiting the untapped opportunities of nature-based ecosystem services, which contribute to successfully achieving the EU green targets/objectives, aligned with the sustainable socio-economic development of the basin.

10. **Welcomes** the new European Innovation Agenda\(^\text{15}\) putting forward innovative interregional cooperation and the improvement of policymaking tools.

a. **Encourages** cooperation on Smart Specialization Strategies especially when featuring blue economy priorities given its key role in the implementation of the Communication on a *New approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU.*\(^\text{16}\) **Calls on** the EU Commission to keep

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\(^\text{13}\) **Welcomes** the international agreement that has been reached for the implementation of Sox ECA in the Mediterranean Sea as a whole from 1\(^\text{st}\) January 2025 and encourages the Mediterranean States, regional organisations and other stakeholders to follow up on such and carry out the necessary studies and appropriate discussions in a holistic manner with a view to implement a NOx ECA in the same area.

\(^\text{14}\) **CPMR Policy Position** - Regional perspectives on the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and its future.

\(^\text{15}\) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a *New European Innovation Agenda to spearhead the new innovation wave*, COM(2022) 332 final.

\(^\text{16}\) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a *New approach for a Sustainable Blue Economy in the EU* - Transforming the EU’s Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future.
encouraging these synergies, the S3 Thematic Platforms and the recently launched S3 Community of Practice being interesting tools to that effect.

b. **Highlights** its engagement in supporting innovation cooperation processes and creating long-lasting conditions for a permanent institutional dialogue on sustainable innovation in the Mediterranean through the Interreg Euro-MED governance project Dialogue4Innovation.\(^{17}\) This cooperation framework will also work to increase the institutional capacity for transformative innovation policies, including policies to boost responsible consumption and productions and the circularity model in the blue economy.

11. **Strongly supports**, in the current context of energy crisis, the increased use of energy from renewable sources to foster (sustainable) energy supply security at more affordable prices alongside energy innovation. Likewise, **underlines** the necessity to make use of resources made available by the EU (such as RepowerEU) and other programs, as well as to adequately assess the energy transition’s environmental impacts.

12. **Welcomes** the EU Council position acknowledging the role of ports in the deployment of alternative energy solutions\(^{18}\) and its willingness to integrate this approach within the TEN-T regulation. **Hopes** that the EU Council will convince the European Parliament to adopt this position as well, and **calls on** the upcoming Spanish Presidency to defend the EU Council’s position in this regard.

   a. **Stresses** the ongoing relevance for transport issues of carrying out an identification and prioritisation, in accordance with all the legitimate interests involved, of pending actions in the field of investments and related services, and of overcoming technical obstacles in view of the upcoming MFF mid-term revision.

   b. **Calls**, along the same lines, on greater simplification between the various funds made available, especially those related to energy transition and transports projects, and the reduction of administrative barriers for an effective and sound governance of the TEN-T, especially in line with the “Smart TEN-T” Directive on quicker permit-granting procedures and public procurement.\(^{19}\)

13. **Shares** the messages encompassed in the Granada Charter on Sustainable Tourism\(^{20}\), particularly highlighting the need to boost the development of a Mediterranean Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (MED NSTO\(^{21}\)) to promote harmonisation in tourism data collection in the basin and contributing to the works of the UNWTO INSTO\(^{22}\) with a clear Mediterranean perspective.

14. **Reiterates** its support to the Glasgow Declaration initiative\(^{23}\) and **invites** more Mediterranean Regions to adhere to it. **Commits** to keep its engagement with the initiative implementation in the basin also through the new Interreg Euro-MED governance project Community4Tourism.\(^{24}\)

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\(^{17}\) [https://innovative-sustainable-economy.interreg-euro-med.eu](https://innovative-sustainable-economy.interreg-euro-med.eu)

\(^{18}\) Aligned with the Key outcomes and conclusions of “The role of maritime ports at the crossroad of the energy transition seminar” organized during the CPMR Political Bureau with the support of Murcia Region on 9th March 2023, in Cartagena.


\(^{20}\) The Interreg MED BEST MED project [Granada Charter on Sustainable Tourism](https://granada-charter.eu/).

\(^{21}\) The Interreg MED BEST MED project paved the way for the creation of the MED NSTO, a task that was well received by the UNWTO and that is now continued in the framework of the Interreg Euro-MED Community4Tourism project.

\(^{22}\) The UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) is a network of tourism observatories monitoring the economic, environmental and social impact of tourism at the destination level.

\(^{23}\) One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme (2021) - [Glasgow Declaration: a Commitment to a Decade of Climate Action](https://www.oneplanet宣言.org/)

\(^{24}\) The CPMR IMC is also currently involved in the [REBOOT MED](https://rebootmed.net/) project, an EMFAF flagship project aiming to encourage public-private partnership co-defining Blue Economy Action Plans for the Recovery of the tourism sector, and to incubate, accelerate and test new eco/blue economy tourism packages in 10 pilot areas in 6 Western Mediterranean countries.
15. **Is proud** of the involvement of the Mediterranean Youth Council (MYC) in the CPMR and Intermediterranean Commission's statutory meetings and external events, as part of its strategic plan to strengthen interactions and intercultural dialogue with young people for the future of our Regions. **Calls** on a common reflection regarding the financial support to be provided for the MYC project alongside the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region. **Recommends** that these interactions become more systematic to reach their translation into concrete collaborative actions.