

Press Release

Barcelona Convention COP23 begins tomorrow and runs in parallel to COP28 Climate Summit

CALL FOR A CARBON BUDGET FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

OceanCare urges Mediterranean range States to impose climate emergency action

Overview:

- In parallel to the Climate COP28, Mediterranean Sea Range States meet from 5th to 8th of December 2023 in Portoroz, Slovenia, to discuss next steps for the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP)
- OceanCare calls on governments to determine the maximum CO₂ amount the Mediterranean region could emit until 2050 and not exceed the 2°C threshold set by the Paris Agreement
- UN biodiversity action plans need to be consistent with efforts being made at the UNFCCC COP28 on climate change
- The Mediterranean basin is already experiencing an average air temperature increase of 1.54°C and scientific studies project it to reach 2.2°C between 2030 and 2052
- Without concerted political will, fossil fuels will remain the dominant source of energy in the region's primary energy mix

Wädenswil, Switzerland/Portoroz, Slovenia, 4th December 2023: The Mediterranean basin is a climate change hotspot and it has already exceeded the 1.5°C threshold. Reports about extreme water temperature of beyond 30°C have raised intense media attention in previous months. This week, in parallel to the 28th climate summit (COP28), the 23rd COP of the Barcelona Convention is taking place in Portoroz, Slovenia, discussing the future steps of the Mediterranean Sea Action Plan, including on the devastating impacts of global warming. The international marine protection organisation OceanCare is calling on governments to impose emergency action, including a carbon budget, to contribute activities which are measurable and transparent.

According to scientific studies carried out under the Barcelona Convention, the region is affected by climate change at a much higher rate than the global average, and scientists predict that without ambitious measures to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions the region could exceed the upper limit set by the Paris Agreement of 2°C as early as 2030.

The "State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean" (SoED 2020) report concludes that the Mediterranean basin is affected by a faster warming of the air and sea surface in all seasons. While the global average air temperature is now about 1.1°C above pre-industrial values, the Mediterranean region is approaching 1.54°C. This parameter is following an increasing trend of the order of 0.01-0.05°C per year since the 1980s. Warming in the Mediterranean is projected to reach 2.2°C between 2030 and 2052, when the global average is expected to reach the 1.5°C threshold outlined in the Paris Agreement.

The effects of global warming are becoming more and more evident in the region and, according to the conclusions of the SoED 2020 report, we need to be "*conscious that recent extreme events such as deadly floods, drought, and unprecedented wildfires across Mediterranean countries, are symptomatic of the rapidly worsening condition of the climate of the region*".

Extreme weather events, such as the terrible disaster in Libya driven by heavy rains of the recent storms, which also previously affected Türkiye and Greece, where the rain fell in huge quantities, shortly after terrible wildfires, are indication for future trends.

At COP23 of the Barcelona Convention a new report on "Climate and Environmental Coastal Risks in the Mediterranean", which is likely to create an even more dire picture of the future, will be adopted. This study concludes that the mean sea surface temperature of the Mediterranean Sea, compared to the end of the 20th century (1976-2005) is expected to increase by mid-21st (2021-2050) century in the range of 0.6°C to 1.3°C and by the end of the 21st century (2071-2100) in the range of 2.7°C to 3.8°C under the very high greenhouse gas emissions scenario (high confidence).

"Science offers a frightening outlook for the Mediterranean area as a result of climate change. Unfortunately, despite the overwhelming evidence on the disproportionate impact of climate change in the Mediterranean, most range states are not taking a lead in decarbonisation efforts", says Nicolas Entrup, Director of International Relations at OceanCare.

Fossil fuels remain the dominant energy source in the region's primary energy mix and oil will continue to be the dominant fuel, as the region's oil demand will continue to rise, in particular for transport fuels. There are more than two hundred active offshore platforms in the Mediterranean and offshore exploration in the Mediterranean to uncover further significant reserves of oil and gas is ongoing.

OceanCare urges governments to adopt clear and ambitious decarbonisation targets for the whole Mediterranean region in the short, medium and long term within the Mediterranean Action Plan. *"Such a step would be the flesh to the bone to the proposed creation of a new Regional Activity Centre on Climate Change by Türkiye,"* says Entrup.

"Governments and the private sector need to walk the talk. Not exceeding 1.5°C in the Mediterranean is a mission impossible, this opportunity has passed. But the decarbonization objective to stay within the 2°C limit is still accomplishable and an obligation by the Paris Agreement," states Carlos Bravo, Ocean Policy Expert at OceanCare. *"This request is fully consistent with the efforts being made at the COP28 on climate change taking place in parallel in Dubai, where a call to set a goal of phasing out fossil fuels has been proposed,"* Bravo adds.

One fundamental pillar in imposing measurable activities to turn the tide, which OceanCare is requesting the Conference of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention (UNEP/MAP) to adopt, is to clearly determine the carbon budget (the total amount of emissions of CO₂-eq that may be released to the atmosphere from now to 2050) still available in the Mediterranean region in order to meet the objective of not exceeding the 2°C threshold set by the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Of course, this does not imply State Parties may abandon their commitment to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to as close as possible to 1.5 degrees Celsius on a global scale.

ENDS

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

(1) "State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean" (SoED 2020)

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Nicolas Entrup and Carlos Bravo are attending in person the COP23 of UNEP/MAP in Portoroz (Slovenia) and are available for media queries.

OceanCare will participate, together with ACCOBAMS, Sinay and Tethys Research Institute, in a side event organised in the framework of COP23 on "Ocean Noise Pollution and reduction of the environmental footprint of shipping". The event will take place on Tuesday 5 December, at 18:45.

About OceanCare

OceanCare is a Swiss non-profit organisation. It was founded in 1989 and has a strong commitment to realistic and cooperative initiatives. The organisation works at national and international level in the areas of marine pollution, environmental changes, fisheries, whaling, sealing, captivity of marine mammals and public education.

OceanCare holds Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and is partner of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the UNEP/CMS Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), as well as UNEP/MAP. Since 2021, OceanCare is accredited observer to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the International Seabed Authority (ISA). The organisation has been an observer at the IWC since 1992. OceanCare has also been accredited as part of the Major Group 'Science & Technology' to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), which is the governing body of UNEP and is a part of the UNEP Global Partnership on Marine Litter.