

**Brief Note on Cooperation possibilities between
The Blue/Green Project of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), and the
GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) implemented by UNDP**

The Blue Green project of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) works on facilitating regional networking and exchange on water and environment and support capacity development of CSOs in the Mediterranean region. The GEF SGP implemented by UNDP is active in many countries in the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean and aims to support local and country driven actions to support global environmental and local sustainable development benefits through CSO and community led actions. Both projects may benefit from information exchange and coordination to improve linkages from the local to country and regional level and vice versa. This note presents the two projects and lists some initial ideas for collaboration discussed in a Skype call held between the UfM Secretariat, SGP Central Programme Management Team and UNDP EU NGO project.¹

Blue Green Project of the UFM

The UfM was launched in 2008 to revitalize the Euro-Mediterranean process. The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an intergovernmental organisation bringing together the 28 European Union Member States and 15 countries from the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean (all Southern and Eastern Mediterranean coastal countries, as well as nearby Jordan and Mauritania).

It serves as a framework for policy dialogue and exchange of project ideas, experiences and best practices among governments, key international institutions and cooperation structures. The UfM provides a unique platform to formulate regional priorities and decide on specific cooperation initiatives to be put in place. It provides a unique forum to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The UfM is currently co-chaired by the European Union through its European Union External Service - EEAS and by Jordan MoFA as chair for the Southern and Eastern countries (the Southern Co- Presidency rotates every 3 years). The UfM Board meets every 3 months and gathers the representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the 43 member countries.

The UfM Secretariat ensures operational follow-up of the regional priorities identified and in partnership with key international actors promotes region-wide cooperation projects and initiatives that address the root causes of the current regional security and socio-economic challenges to foster enhanced regional integration and sustainable development. The UfM Secretariat is operational as of 2010 and has 6 Divisions based on the regional priorities identified by its Member Countries; one of these technical Divisions is the Environment and Water Division. The Secretariat of UfM is based in Barcelona. The UfM Secretariat mainly operates at three levels:

¹ The discussion was held on November 5th 2015, and included the following participants: Ms. Alessandra Sensi (Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean- UfM), Ms. Tehmina Akhtar (UNDP GEF SGP), Ms. Petra Valastinova (UNDP IRH, UNDP EC Environmental Governance Project), Tamara Tschentscher (Consultant, UNDP EC Environmental Governance Project).

- Through UfM Ministerial meetings (gathering MoFA and line Ministries based on the subject)
- Through platforms for dialogues, which prioritize regional issues for actions (joint work programmes and actions such as initiatives and projects)
- Initiatives and Projects

The Blue Green Project (BG) is a project “labelled” by the UfM, namely prioritized at regional level for joint action. BG focuses on Water and Environment issues and involvement of CSOs.

The overall goal of the project is to strengthen existing, and promote new, cooperation and financial opportunities among Euro-Mediterranean Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) dedicated to water and environment, thereby maximising their contribution to sustainable development in the region. More specifically, it aims to:

- Reinforce the participation and cooperation of southern CSOs through an integrated capacity building programme able to pool technical/organizational expertise and tools in the field of water and environment alongside lessons learned and resources;
- Strengthen existing dialogue and participatory decision making, as well as promote new collaboration opportunities, between civil society, public authorities and other relevant stakeholders through concrete actions
- Function as a mechanism allowing for CSOs/NGOs to meaningfully benefit from regional Mediterranean projects and processes.

The project has a number of “promoters”, which are International CSOs and IGOs closely working with NGOs, such as IUCN, including:

- Reseau Arabe pour l’Environnement et Developpement (RAED),
- Mediterranean Information Office (MIO-ECSDE),
- WWF – Mediterranean Programme Office,
- IUCN, the World Conservation Union
- MedWET (The Mediterranean Wetland Initiative, part of RAMSAR; *which joined after labelling*)
- Institut Mediterranean de l’Eau (IME)

These organizations are involved as key partners in most of the Mediterranean regional processes/activities, have a strong presence on the ground as well as extended networks. As mentioned, they compose the consortium of the BG project.

UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme

The SGP has been active since 1992 when it was first established as a pilot programme of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), implemented by UNDP, with the aim of promoting community and CSOs participation in taking actions to benefit the global environment while also meeting local sustainable development needs. The SGP provides small grant funding directly to local communities and CSOs in countries and is country driven with National Coordinators based in country and funding decisions taken by National Steering Committees. The SGP is currently active in over 125 countries. In the Mediterranean region, SGP programmes are running in the following countries: Albania, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania.

Given the country driven nature of SGP, funds for grant-making as well as for capacity development activities are normally available at the country level, with limited funds or opportunities for engagement at regional or sub-regional level. The exception to this is SGP's experience in other regions, particularly through other GEF funded regional seas and international water basin wide programmes that have in other regions provided a regionally agreed set of priorities and supported regional exchange among local and national actors. In turn SGP has been able to provide these programmes a means of engagement of grassroots actors and communities in order to facilitate on the ground action to implement regional plans.

SGP is currently starting the first year of its 6th operational phase (2015-2018) with a number of strategic planning activities ongoing. It was noted that this is an opportune time for discussing regional priorities as the SGP Country Programmes and SGP National Coordinators are now in the process of preparation of SGP Country Programme Strategy for 2015-2018 and the operational concept of cooperation could be inputted into this ongoing process

Opportunities for cooperation:

The key purpose of cooperation between the BG and SGP would be to take advantage of the presence of both projects within the Mediterranean region to help connect local, national and regional processes and actions supporting the environment, and facilitating participation of CSOs. The aim of this cooperation is to link the ongoing regional processes with national processes and capitalize on existing regional and national structures/ contacts/networks and activities. It was clarified that there will be no financial transfers related to cooperation, just coordination of activities. It was agreed that collaboration would focus on better information exchange and taking advantage of existing and planned activities around the region and in specific countries. The national coordinators will be able to circulate information about BG regional events and activities to their grantee networks and support participation of CSOs to these events.

Two key areas for partnership were identified:

- 1) SGP to be informed about regional trainings and capacity building activities organized by BG Project promoters (RAED, MIO-ESCDE, WWF, IUCN, MedWET, IME) and to help circulate information to its grantees and help where possible to identify qualified CSOs for participation, upon availability of funds.
- 2) SGP and BG to collaborate to identify additional funding for regional coordination, through resource mobilization opportunities, where available, at national, or possibly regional/global levels.

Next Steps:

The following initial steps were discussed:

- 1) In practical terms, the cooperation would start with identification of the target countries where links between SGP National Coordinators (NCs) and BlueGreen promoters could be established. Albania, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania are both covered by SGP and the BG promoters.

- 2) A copy of the BG Project document would be provided, as well as names and contacts of its promoters in the region for SGP CPMT to share with National Coordinators in its country programmes in target countries
- 3) A list of SGP National Coordinators in the countries around the region where SGP is active to be provided to the UFM Secretariat for sharing with the BG project promoters.
- 4) Preparation of this brief note describing the opportunities for mutually beneficial exchange and cooperation and its circulation to BG promoters and SGP National Coordinators.
- 5) Agreement that country level and regional colleagues may be directly in contact to discuss activities, networking opportunities and events that may be of mutual interest and benefit.
- 6) Launch of the agreement at the operational level, as mentioned above, through an exchange of e-mails between GEF SGP and the promoters of the UfM labeled BlueGreen Project, with the UfM Secretariat in copy.

[UfM BLUEGREEN MED-CS website](#)

[SWIM-H2020 SM website](#)