SESSION CONCEPT – ALF in COP31 Mediterranean Pavilion

November 13th, 16.30

Proposed title: Pathways to a Sustainable Mediterranean Blue Economy through Community Resilience and Regenerative Tourism

Organised by Anna Lindh Foundation in collaboration with Eco-Union, Member of Spanish ALF Network of Civil Society

Moderator: Giulia Balestracci, Project Officer & Coordinator of Blue Tourism Initiative, Eco-Union

Panellists:

- Céline Kauffmann, Chief Programmes Officer, IDDRI
- Yaprak Arda, Marine Programme Officer, IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation
- Dr. Aygun Karli, ALF Young Leader & Research Assistant, Anna Lindh Foundation & Atilim University
- Dr. Emad Adly, General Coordinator, Arab Network for Environment and Development

Concept:

The Mediterranean is a global biodiversity hotspot and one of the regions most vulnerable to climate change. Growing coastal populations, intensive tourism and competing uses of marine and coastal resources are increasing pressures on ecosystems and communities. At the same time, the Blue Economy offers opportunities to create sustainable jobs, foster innovation and strengthen coastal resilience. As one of the region's most prominent Blue Economy sectors, tourism can contribute to this transition if its development supports healthy ecosystems, resilient communities and inclusive local economies. Building on lessons from the **Blue Tourism Initiative** and the **Mediterranean Blue Tourism Flagship** under the **Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development** (MSSD), the event aims to scale up cooperation and action for a more sustainable and fair coastal and marine economy across both shores of the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Objective and focus

The side event will explore how regenerative tourism and community engagement can contribute to a thriving, resilient and fair Mediterranean Blue Economy. Bringing together policymakers, regional organisations, experts and young leaders, the discussion will focus on:

- Strengthening coastal resilience and marine and coastal ecosystem conservation;
- Fostering innovative and inclusive blue tourism models based on community engagement, with attention to the social dimension and justice;
- Involving young people as partners in shaping blue tourism across the Euro-Mediterranean;
- Translating local solutions into policy, investment and regional action;
- Strengthening multi-stakeholder, cross-sector and cross-country cooperation.

The session will present insights from the **Blue Tourism Initiative** and the **INCORE MED** project, and will introduce the **MED Blue Tourism Flagship** as a regional mechanism to connect and scale up action across the Mediterranean.

Choreography

The **1-hour panel** debate opens with a framing by the moderator and a short presentation of the MED Blue Tourism Flagship. It is followed by a discussion in two rounds, the first on the Euro-Mediterranean perspective and the second on inclusion, the social dimension and justice, and by an open exchange with the audience. **Partners and contributors** include representatives from **Eco-Union**, an environmental Think and Do Tank, coordinator of the Blue Tourism Initiative; **IDDRI**, the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations; **IUCN Med**, the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation; the **Anna Lindh Foundation** (ALF) and its Young Leaders; and **UNEP/MAP**, secretariat of the Mediterranean Action Plan for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea. The session will conclude by identifying priority pathways for cooperation towards a **Sustainable Mediterranean Blue Economy** that protects nature, strengthens coastal resilience and creates lasting value for coastal communities.

Panelists' Bios



Giulia Balestracci, Project Officer & Coordinator of Blue Tourism Initiative, Eco-Union

Giulia Balestracci is Policy and Project Officer at eco-union, a Barcelona-based think-and-do tank. She coordinates international and EU-funded projects on blue tourism and the green economy across the Mediterranean and beyond, including the Blue Tourism Initiative. She works on sustainable blue tourism, ocean governance and the link between science and policy. She has worked with with international agencies, governments, civil society, NGOs and research centres in the Mediterranean and Africa. She holds two master's degrees in sustainable tourism planning and management, and she is finalising a PhD on blue tourism and ocean governance.



Céline Kauffman, Chief Programmes Officer, IDDRI

Céline Kauffmann is Chief Programmes Officer at IDDRI, guiding its strategy, stakeholder dialogue and international partnerships. She spent over two decades at the OECD, most recently heading (2020–2023) the Division on Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Tourism, where she led work on greening SMEs, green entrepreneurship and sustainable finance. Earlier OECD roles covered regulatory policy, green investment and the African Economic Outlook. She holds a PhD in economics from Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne.



Yaprak Arda, Marine Programme Officer, IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation

Yaprak Arda is Marine Programme Officer in the Marine Biodiversity and Blue Economy team of the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN Med) in Málaga. Her work focuses on marine and coastal protected areas and Nature-based Solutions across the Mediterranean. She contributes to IUCN Med's work toward the 30x30 target and has supported the management of Specially Environmentally Protected Areas in Türkiye. She also works to bring fishers, conservationists and other sea users together to reduce conflicts and promote sustainable fishing practices.



Dr. Aygun Karli, ALF Young Leader & Research Assistant, Anna Lindh Foundation & Atilim University

Aygün Karlı, PhD, is a Research Assistant in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Atılım University, Ankara, Türkiye. He earned his PhD in Public Administration from Hacettepe University in 2026, focusing on marine environmental policies and the climate crisis in Türkiye and the European Union. His research interests include marine and climate governance, sustainable blue economy, and marine environmental policy. He contributes to several international COST Actions and coordinates EU Commission-funded projects on marine social sciences and island climate literacy. He is a Young Ocean Advocate at the Youth4Ocean Forum, a founding member of the Global Climate Academy, and a member of the European Marine Science Educators Association. His publications address blue justice, marine life, and climate–marine governance.



Dr. Emad Aly, General Coordinator, Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)

Dr. Emad Adly is an Environmental Specialist with extensive experience of over 40 years in fostering regional and international partnerships on issues related to sustainable development including environment, water and sanitation, climate change, ICZM, DRR, energy transition, biodiversity, and participatory development and governance. Has been working with international agencies, governments, civil society, grassroot organizations, youth, media, and NGOs. Founder and co-founder of a number of Egyptian, Arab, Mediterranean, African and global initiatives, networks and non- governmental organizations including Arab Office for Youth and Environment AOYE, Egyptian Sustainable Development Forum ESDF and National Nile Discourse Forum Eg-NDF in Egypt, Arab Network for Environment and Development RAED in the Arab region, Mediterranean Information Office MIO-ECSDE in the Mediterranean and Nile BasinDiscourse NBD in the Nile Basin region.

Organisation	About
	Eco-union: An independent think-and-do tank founded in Barcelona in 2005 that works to accelerate the socio-ecological transition across the Euro-Mediterranean region. It coordinates the Blue Tourism Initiative and leads work on the green and blue economy.
	Anna Lindh Foundation: An intergovernmental institution that promotes intercultural dialogue across the Euro-Mediterranean through a network of more than 3,000 civil society organisations in 43 countries, with programmes that support young leaders in the region.
	Blue Tourism Initiative: A multi-stakeholder innovation programme on the sustainable management, governance and planning of coastal and marine tourism in the Mediterranean, the Western Indian Ocean and the Caribbean. It is co-led by IDDRI and eco-union and co-funded by the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM).
	IDDRI: The Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations is an independent think tank based in Paris. It works on sustainable development issues that need global coordination, including oceans, biodiversity and the transformation of economic sectors.
	IUCN Med: The IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, based in Málaga, connects science, policy, management and action to conserve nature in the Mediterranean, including marine and coastal protected areas and a sustainable blue economy.