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A celebration of biodiversity hotspots, the “34 wonders of the world”, with an exhibition of posters lining the railings of Parisian streets, provided an exciting backdrop to a meeting for the [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund’s](#) (CEPF) investment in the Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot.

The CEPF Regional Implementation Team (RIT), which is provided by the BirdLife Partnership, had its own cause for celebration. Eighteen months into CEPF’s five-year investment in the Mediterranean Hotspot, a total of \$6.7 million has been allocated to 57 large and small grant projects in all 12 eligible countries.

Altogether, CEPF will invest \$10 million in the Mediterranean Hotspot. To make sure that the remaining money is spent in the right way, the RIT has established a Hotspot Advisory Committee.

“The committee will look at the Ecosystem Profile as a whole, and test our assumptions about where the gaps are, and the action points and key areas to focus on”, said Liz Smith. “We will go to them for advice about what to include in our next calls for proposals.”

The Ecosystem Profile on which the investment in the Mediterranean Hotspot is based is now more than two years old, and there have been many political and other changes since it was compiled. The committee members, some of whom worked on the Profile, will be able to contribute the changes in their own countries, while keeping their knowledge of the region as a whole up to date.

The committee’s eleven members come from a mixture of large international and smaller local organisations, combining global oversight and on-the-ground experience which, in the case of one member, includes more than 30 years working with community-based conservation organisations.

“Many of the committee members represent organisations which have been working in the Mediterranean for decades. But because the region is so large, some of them had never met before we established the Hotspot Advisory Committee”, said Liz Smith.

They will offer regional and local insights on issues such as coastal zone management and tourism development. For example, Liz Smith says, “the construction industry is one of the most influential of the sectors we have to deal with in Integrated Coastal Zone Management, one of our three Strategic Directions, so how do we influence them? It’s different in each country. In Morocco, tourism development has been going on for a long time, but in Libya and Algeria infrastructure is being rebuilt, and in the Balkans there’s a risk of runaway overdevelopment. So what’s the best approach? The committee members will be able to advise us.”

The committee will meet face to face at least once a year, but will also continue their dialogue more informally. Information on the current [Mediterranean Basin projects can be found here](#).