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pour la Méditerranée

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# GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN



**Report of the forty-first session**

Budva, Montenegro, 16 – 20 October 2017

# 41

GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

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REPORT OF THE FORTY-FIRST SESSION

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## PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is the final version of the report adopted on 20 October 2017 by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean at its forty-first session in Budva, Montenegro.

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### ABSTRACT

The forty-first session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean as well as the eighth session of the Committee on Administration and Finance was attended by delegates of 22 contracting parties, as well as of three cooperating non-contracting parties and one non-contracting party. Representatives from 20 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its regional projects as well as the Bureaus of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, were also in attendance.

During the session, the progress in the implementation of the mid-term strategy was reviewed, including in relation to the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration. Moreover, cooperation activities within the framework of agreements with contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties and with partner organizations were discussed. In light of its increasing cooperation with the GFCM, the Commission granted cooperating non-contracting party status to the Republic of Moldova.

In relation to the management of fisheries and aquaculture in the GFCM area of application, a total of eight binding recommendations were adopted, dealing with the following issues: reporting of aquaculture data and information; management of blackspot seabream fisheries in the Alboran Sea; establishment of a fisheries restricted area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit (Adriatic Sea); multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea; establishment of a regional adaptive management plan for the exploitation of red coral in the Mediterranean; submission of data on fishing activities in the GFCM area of application; a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application and an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside the waters under national jurisdiction in the Strait of Sicily. Furthermore, the Commission adopted six resolutions including: a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture; guidelines for the streamlining of aquaculture authorization and leasing processes; the reactivation of the Working Group on Fishing Technology; a permanent working group on vulnerable marine ecosystems; a network of essential fish habitats and the application of an International Maritime Organization number.

Finally, the Commission adopted its programme of work for the next intersession and approved its budget amounting to US\$2 532 162 for 2018 as well as a number of strategic actions to be funded through extrabudgetary resources. It also unanimously endorsed the renewed Bureaus of the Committee on Administration and Finance, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture, the Working Group on the Black Sea and the Compliance Committee.

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## OPENING AND ARRANGEMENTS OF THE SESSION

1. The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) held its forty-first session as well as the eighth session of its Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF) in Budva, Montenegro, from 16 to 20 October 2017. Attendants included delegates from 22 GFCM contracting parties, 3 cooperating non-contracting parties and 1 non-contracting party as well as observers, among which representatives from 20 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and its regional projects, the Bureaus of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies and the GFCM Secretariat. The list of participants is provided in Appendix 2.

2. Mr Milutin Simovic, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro, welcomed participants to Budva. He underlined that his country was fully committed to the efforts made by the GFCM to achieve greater sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture. This would help national economies to thrive while promoting fisheries and aquaculture as attractive industries for present and future generations in the context of blue growth.

3. Mr Árni M. Mathiesen, Assistant Director-General, FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, addressed participants on behalf of the FAO Director-General, Mr José Graziano da Silva, acknowledging that the opening session of the Commission was being organized on the occasion of the World Food Day, a major event for FAO. In this regard, he referred to the importance of fisheries and aquaculture in eradicating hunger and expressed his view that the GFCM, in its capacity of Article XIV body, had a key role to play in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

4. Mr Stefano Cataudella, GFCM Chairperson, sincerely thanked the Government of Montenegro for hosting the session. He drew the attention of participants to the mid-term strategy (2017-2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries (mid-term strategy) adopted by the Commission at its fortieth session (Malta, June 2016). This instrument provided a framework to take action towards reverting the alarming status of fisheries in the region. At the same time, he called for improved interactions between fisheries and aquaculture in line with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF).

5. As part of the statement by the European Union (EU), a video message by Mr Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, highlighted the objectives of the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration (MedFish4Ever Declaration) and the Bucharest Declaration of the High-level Conference towards enhanced cooperation on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture (Bucharest Declaration). These regional declarations were recognized as two milestones towards attaining the sustainable use of fisheries resources, protecting the marine environment and promoting regional cooperation. In addition, the increasing participation of riparian countries in the MedFish4Ever Declaration – which was now signed by fifteen countries – was stressed. This echoed the common sentiment among riparian states that swift action from GFCM contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) was needed in order to revert current trends.

6. Following these opening addresses, Mr Abdellah Srour, GFCM Executive Secretary, introduced delegations and observers, and provided information on the arrangements for the meeting. He then reported on the credentials received, noting that 21 countries had presented their credentials and inviting those who had not presented their credentials yet to do so.

7. The delegates of Bulgaria, Lebanon and Spain referred to the ongoing establishment of subregional units in their respective countries, in the context of the subregional approach to fisheries management in place within the GFCM. Such units would ensure closer interactions between the GFCM

and the work done by countries at the subregional level. All three countries had been advancing considerably, including through consultations with the FAO, and expressed their hope that the units they would host could be operational during the next intersession.

8. The delegates of Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Libya and Morocco praised the efforts of the GFCM in implementing the mid-term strategy in close coordination with countries. This undertaking was particularly fitting given the political momentum stemming from the MedFish4Ever Declaration and taking into account the increasing global recognition of the significance of oceans in promoting sustainable development and eradicating hunger, as stated by the delegate of Monaco. Strong satisfaction was expressed for the actions taken by the GFCM to provide support, particularly through technical assistance.

9. The Commission was informed about the statement of competence and voting rights by the EU and its Member States, which is reproduced in document GFCM:41/2017/Inf.4. The agenda was adopted without changes as attached in Appendix 1. The documents available to the Commission are listed in Appendix 3.

10. The full text of opening speeches and statements is provided in their original language in Appendix 4.

## **PROGRESS ON COOPERATION MATTERS**

11. On the basis of document GFCM:41/2017/Inf.5, the GFCM Secretariat reported on cooperation issues, including with CPCs in the remit of adopted letters of agreement (LoA) and consistent with the mid-term strategy. Information on the participation of the GFCM Secretariat in relevant global and regional fora was also provided, together with a progress report on the implementation of existing memoranda of understanding (MoUs).

12. With regard to LoA, the delegates of Albania, Morocco, Tunisia, Georgia and Ukraine underlined their importance in underpinning national efforts to meet common commitments relating to fisheries management, data collection, aquaculture and vessel monitoring system (VMS).

13. The Commission praised the LoA mechanism as it streamlined actions to support CPCs. To this end, the continuation of LoA in place was encouraged in order to follow through with the activities foreseen therein. Moreover, it called upon CPCs that were negotiating LoA with the GFCM to adopt such instruments before long.

14. The delegates of Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya and Morocco referred to national consultations with the GFCM Secretariat, in the framework of effective implementation of the mid-term strategy. These had greatly contributed to raise awareness on existing national priorities and it was hence important to keep up with such consultations, including in coordination with the FAO regional projects.

15. The delegate of the EU called for periodical dissemination of information on the provision of technical assistance to CPCs as this would ensure consistency while avoiding competing activities. In addition to GFCM and FAO regional project efforts, the EU also had a number of assistance programmes associated to its neighborhood policy. She thus requested that the Commission provide a summary progress report on technical assistance to each CPC, while also expressing the EU's reciprocal commitment to informing the Commission accordingly.

16. The Commission, noting the request by the Republic of Moldova to become a cooperating non-contracting party, consensually granted this status.

17. The delegate of Tunisia underlined the importance for the GFCM to actively participate in relevant international and regional fora in the context of an ecosystem approach to fisheries, in so far as this was relevant to the mandate of the Commission on fisheries and aquaculture. This was fully supported by the Commission.

18. The representative of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas recalled existing cooperation among regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and stressed that ICCAT was paying close attention to conservation and management measures adopted by the GFCM on issues of common concern, such as the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

19. The representatives of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UN Environment/MAP) referred to the progress made in the implementation of ongoing MoUs with the GFCM. They acknowledged with satisfaction the joint activities carried out in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 and stood ready to further cooperate with the GFCM on issues relating to sustainable fisheries and the preservation of marine ecosystems.

20. The representative of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) stressed the importance for his organization to cooperate with the GFCM and requested the Commission to enter into an MoU focusing on activities linked, among others, to data collection, small-scale fisheries and aquaculture.

21. Similarly, the representative of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) noted that, following growing coordination with the GFCM, as confirmed by the GFCM Secretariat, there was a need to formalize ongoing cooperation. Consequently, she requested the Commission to enter into an MoU focusing on activities linked, among others, to blue economy, governance and cooperation in research.

22. The Commission agreed to enter into an MoU with AOAD and UfM and instructed the GFCM Executive Secretary to sign these MoUs during the intersession, after having obtained the necessary clearances from the FAO.

23. The delegate of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) welcomed ongoing cooperation with the GFCM. He informed participants that BSEC would convene a regional conference on blue growth in the Black Sea and invited them to share their knowledge and expertise in this framework.

## **REPORT ON FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES IN 2016–2017**

### **Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture**

24. Mr François René, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ), presented the activities of the Committee, based on documents GFCM:41/2017/3 and GFCM:41/2017/Inf.10. These activities included meetings within the remit of the GFCM Aquaculture Task Force (ATF) and relevant CAQ working groups as well as activities of the GFCM Multi-Stakeholder Platform (AMShP).

25. The representative of Tunisia recalled the key contribution of the CAQ in terms of producing practical and technical deliverables on aquaculture and noted especially that the active role of countries,

including his own, together with farmers and other stakeholders, was essential to achieving these deliverables. In particular, he stressed Tunisia's positive cooperation with the CAQ on the establishment of allocated zones for aquaculture (AZAs) in the Bay of Monastir, including in relation to a marine protected area (MPA) in this region. He also reiterated Tunisia's interest in establishing an aquaculture regional training centre to promote capacity-building in the southern Mediterranean.

26. The delegate of the EU reiterated its support for the CAQ reorganization process. She underlined the relevance of the key sustainability areas identified, such as governance, aquaculture-environment interactions, animal health and market, and stressed the importance of stakeholder involvement while pursuing aspects enshrined within the Bucharest and MedFish4Ever declarations.

27. Several other delegations also expressed their satisfaction for the significant quality work carried out by the CAQ during the intersession to support aquaculture development in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

### **Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries**

28. Mr Othman Jarboui, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC), presented the activities of the SAC and related expert groups, based on documents GFCM:41/2017/2 and GFCM:41/2017/Inf.9. He referred in particular to regional activities in the field of stock assessment, marine environment and ecosystems, data collection, small-scale and recreational fisheries as well as to activities within the framework of the subregional approach.

29. The work of the SAC was repeatedly commended for the multiple topics covered by its subregional committees and ad hoc technical groups as well as for the useful advice provided on a wide range of regional and subregional issues.

30. The representative of the EU praised the strong contribution of the SAC to the implementation of the mid-term strategy, acknowledging the improved quality of the scientific advice produced, which better supported the Commission's work and was increasingly useful for managers. She insisted on the need to improve synergies with national institutes and other relevant bodies so to ensure that all key stocks be assessed by 2020, as highlighted in the MedFish4Ever commitments.

31. Several delegations, in particular those of Egypt and Morocco, recognized the relevance of the subregional approach to fisheries management and underlined its importance in the context of targeted discussions within the subregional committees, inviting the Commission to pursue its work in line with such approach.

32. The delegate of Morocco also specified that trainings, such as those on novel stock assessment methodologies delivered since the launch of the mid-term strategy, were crucial towards the continuous improvement of advice. The delegate of Egypt, instead, praised the joint work of GFCM and UN Environment/MAP on non-indigenous species (NIS). Finally, the delegate of Tunisia referred to the advances related to small-scale fisheries, welcoming the launch of technical work to produce advice towards the management of these important fisheries.

33. The GFCM Chairperson underlined the importance of realising the full potential of existing methodologies as well as exploring more appropriate assessment and management approaches.

### **Working Group on the Black Sea**

34. Mr Simion Nicolaev, Coordinator of the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS), presented the activities of the working group and its expert groups on the basis of documents GFCM:41/2017/2

and GFCM:41/2017/Inf.11. The WGBS had provided specific advice in support of management, as requested by the Commission.

35. The delegate of the EU applauded the work carried out within the context of the WGBS, praising the outstanding contribution of national experts in producing, for the first time, an assessment of management measures for turbot. In this respect, the establishment of the BlackSea4Fish project was essential in facilitating knowledge-sharing, improving the provision of advice and promoting cooperation in the Black Sea.

36. The representative of Turkey welcomed the results of the WGBS meeting on the establishment of an Aquaculture Demonstrative Centre in the Black Sea and appreciated the availability of the National Institute for Marine Research and Development (NIMRD) in Romania to host a demonstration centre module for mussel farming. Furthermore, she reiterated the willingness of Turkey to host the demonstration modules for finfish farming and to make available the expertise and aquaculture facilities of the Central Fisheries Research Institute (CFRI) in Trabzon, recalling also the long-standing experience of the institute in relating with the private sector for practical training and capacity-building activities on aquaculture.

### **Compliance Committee**

37. Mr Samir Majdalani, Chairperson of the Compliance Committee (CoC), cursorily highlighted compliance-related activities carried out during the intersession on the basis of documents GFCM:41/2017/4 and GFCM:41/2017/Inf.8. These included the clarification and identification process, the updated IUU list, the progress in the establishment of a pilot VMS and control system and the fight against IUU fishing. The CoC Chairperson recalled that four meetings in connection to these activities had been successfully organized.

38. The delegate of the EU noted that the CoC had efficiently addressed the various issues during the intersession and was fostering a culture on compliance. The work had been remarkable, including in the context of working groups, and further results were expected in the near future. To this end, she referred to the groundbreaking pilot project on the control of the Strait of Sicily which further empowered the role of the CoC.

39. The delegate of Turkey informed on the progress made in the establishment of the VMS, which was in the process of being extended to all fishing vessels above 12 metres. Such a system, including the electronic logbook, was funded by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock. Furthermore, she informed that a fisheries monitoring centre had been recently established in Ankara. Fishing vessels could be monitored via this system simultaneously by the fisheries inspectors in the coastal provincial directorates and by the coast guard command.

40. The delegates of Algeria and Tunisia acknowledged that the CoC had attained a new phase. They highlighted that the pilot project on the Strait of Sicily should become a precedent for operationalizing controls in other subregions and hoped that the CoC would continue to promote such actions in the future.

41. The delegate of Morocco referred to the streamlining of national reports to the CoC. She underlined that this would further help CPCs in the context of the clarification and identification process.

42. The delegate of Libya referred to IUU fishing and called upon the CoC to increase efforts to fight this scourge.

43. The representatives of The Shark Trust and Project Aware thanked the CoC for its participatory approach in addressing the issue of the conservation of sharks. She highlighted that an initial effort to assess implementation with conservation measures in place was ongoing and further efforts would be needed, including by CPCs and the GFCM Secretariat.

44. The Commission acknowledged with satisfaction the outstanding work of all the subsidiary bodies.

#### **PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MID-TERM STRATEGY TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABILITY OF MEDITERRANEAN AND BLACK SEA FISHERIES, INCLUDING IN RELATION TO THE MEDFISH4EVER DECLARATION**

45. After the adoption of the mid-term strategy, fine-tuned by the Commission in September 2016, further support was drawn to its implementation through the MedFish4Ever and the Bucharest declarations. Priority activities across the five main targets of the mid-term strategy had been identified, presented and discussed within relevant fora, ensuring country participation and stakeholder consultation. These activities were subsequently launched in order to start collecting relevant data and information as of 2018, once a decision would be made on implementation means and national focal points and the necessary methodologies and/or guidelines and implementation roadmaps would be finalized. The strong complementarity between mid-term strategy activities and the objectives of the MedFish4Ever Declaration was underlined.

46. The milestones and tasks already undertaken for each priority activity were schematically presented, providing a snapshot, through a proposed reporting format, on the status of execution of mid-term strategy activities so far. The Commission welcomed this format for reporting progress made towards the implementation of the mid-term strategy.

47. With regard to the MedFish4Ever Declaration, the delegate of Libya referred to the provisions and deadlines on fishing capacity set therein. He reported that his country had not signed this declaration and would not be in a position to comply with envisaged commitments. The delegate of Lebanon also noted that his country had not adopted the MedFish4Ever Declaration since his country had not participated in the Ministerial Conference of Malta and was yet to receive a copy of this instrument via the diplomatic channels.

48. The delegate of Turkey conveyed her gratitude to the GFCM Secretariat and the EastMed project for the very fruitful consultations held at country level. It was important to continue organizing such consultations periodically in the interest of a coordinated implementation of the mid-term strategy.

49. The delegate of Tunisia underlined the importance of the mid-term strategy, including its holistic approach, and called for streamlining its operationalization based on targets, subregions and timeframes.

50. The delegate of Egypt also stressed the importance of national consultations noting that the process initiated by the GFCM Secretariat to involve CPCs, including through their national strategies, was successful and should be furthered.

51. The delegate of the EU referred in particular to the GFCM Forum on Fisheries Science (GFCM Fish Forum) as this event should gather expertise from the global arena so that renowned experts could contribute to such a key activity in the context of the mid-term strategy. She added that this would represent an enormous support for the future scientific work of the GFCM and could become a reference for other RFMOs.

52. The representative of OceanCare informed that her organization was fully supportive of the mid-term strategy, in particular its Target 4. As a practical contribution to this target, she invited CPCs to be involved in the work of OceanCare on the impacts of ocean noise pollution on fisheries.

53. The Commission applauded the work done in the implementation of the mid-term strategy and invited the GFCM Secretariat to continue its pace in order to fully achieve its targets and outputs.

## **DRAFT GFCM STRATEGY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDITERRANEAN AND BLACK SEA AQUACULTURE**

54. The GFCM Secretariat presented the draft GFCM strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture on the basis of document GFCM:41/2017/3.

55. The delegate of the EU expressed strong and full support for the structure, aims and vision of the aquaculture strategy, underlining its comprehensiveness and usefulness, particularly with regard to assisting countries in maintaining their commitments to the MedFish4Ever and Bucharest declarations. She emphasized that the strategy was also an effective instrument that could be used as a basis for the development and implementation of national strategies.

56. The delegate of Tunisia also welcomed the draft strategy. He recalled the status of Mediterranean fish stocks and the need to consider aquaculture development as a response to increasing demand for seafood products. To this end, he noted the importance of organized and rational aquaculture development, also taking into consideration its interactions with fisheries and potential impacts on management scenarios.

57. The delegate of Morocco highlighted the common foundation on which the strategy was developed, underscoring that the participatory approach ensured that it was aligned with national visions and comprehensive enough to tackle diverse challenges.

58. Similarly, the delegate of Algeria expressed her thanks for the development of such a comprehensive framework, which fitted seamlessly with the Algerian strategy and helped achieve national goals.

59. The GFCM Chairperson recalled that preparatory work was carried out by the ATF as per the mandate given by the Commission. He reiterated that the strategy emerged from the countries themselves, who had provided significant contributions. As such, the strategy was the outcome of years of coordinated work.

60. The Commission welcomed the aquaculture strategy as well as the contributions provided by the countries, and, based on an EU proposal, decided to adopt Resolution GFCM/41/2017/1 on a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture, as reproduced in Appendix 13.

## **MANAGEMENT OF MEDITERRANEAN AND BLACK SEA FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE**

### **Aquaculture management advice**

61. The CAQ Chairperson presented the main conclusions and advice emanating from the subsidiary bodies on the basis of documents GFCM:41/2017/3 and GFCM:41/2017/Inf.10. He informed the Commission about the CAQ reorganization in consideration of the increasing issues addressed.

62. The delegate of Tunisia recalled the mandate given to the CAQ to prepare guidelines for the simplification of administrative procedures for aquaculture authorization and leasing. He motioned for the adoption of such guidelines, as prepared by the GFCM Secretariat.

63. The delegate of the EU acknowledged the preparation of the guidelines as an important step towards easing administrative procedures. She sought clarifications on the definition of aquaculture licenses, requesting to reformulate this definition by making reference to the whole authorization process leading to the issuance of licenses.

64. The Commission adopted, with some minor amendments, Resolution GFCM/41/2017/2 on guidelines for the streamlining of aquaculture authorization and leasing processes, the text of which is reproduced in Appendix 14.

65. On the basis of the CAQ advice, the Commission revised Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/6 on reporting of aquaculture data and information, amending Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/4 and agreed to introduce new deadlines for data submission (i.e. 31 December of each calendar year) as well as to remove the submission of data related to feed, fishmeal and fish oil as these were not relevant to the industry. Conversely, it agreed that data requirements on trade and consumption would be slightly amended.

66. The Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/1 on the reporting of aquaculture data and information repealing Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/6, as reproduced in Appendix 5.

67. The representative of IUCN reiterated his appreciation for the cooperation of his organization with the CAQ, particularly on interactions between Mediterranean aquaculture and the preservation of the marine environment, mainly in MPAs. He recalled the distinctiveness of the GFCM as an RFMO also involved in aquaculture and the pioneering work it was doing in the sector. He was supported by the Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) in expressing hopes that the Commission would adopt in the future binding decisions on aquaculture management in order to address transversal issues.

### **Fisheries management and conservation advice**

68. The SAC Chairperson and the WGBS Coordinator presented the advice relating to the status of priority species, the management of select fisheries at the subregional level, data collection, small-scale and recreational fisheries and interactions between fisheries and marine ecosystems.

### ***Overall status of the stocks***

69. An overview of the coverage of priority stocks for which advice was provided by the SAC was presented for each subregion.

70. The delegations of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia highlighted the importance of having adequate coverage of all priority species in all subregions, as foreseen by the mid-term strategy. When gaps were identified, it was necessary to determine whether data were not available or not accessible.

71. The delegate of Egypt noted that single species assessments may be insufficient to provide the Commission with advice in support of the adoption of efficient measures, and that the SAC should shift towards multispecies assessments.

72. The delegates of Albania and Montenegro underlined the small size of their national fleets and remarked that they were making genuine efforts to improve the collection of data for scientific advice

and to make it available soon. They thanked the AdriaMed project for helping with the organization of the work.

73. The GFCM Chairperson remarked on the fact that the extent of the scientific advice provided by the SAC was a reflection of the strengths and weaknesses, in terms of both data and capabilities, of the different subregions. He further called upon national experts to meet their responsibility to share available data within the SAC in order to improve the scientific assessment of priority species.

74. The Commission agreed that, in order to improve the quality of data in support of advice as well as the present coverage of priority species, CPCs had to systematically collect and make data available in support of stock assessment, and assistance should be provided to CPCs where such data were not available. Precautionary measures should be taken, when appropriate.

75. The delegate of the EU stated that there was a pressing need to enhance coordination between the SAC and other bodies, including the Scientific Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF), on stock assessment-related work for priority species.

76. In relation to the assessment of the good environmental status (GES) of commercially exploited populations, the advice to continue the work on the definition of regional and subregional indicators through the SAC and the WGBS, and in coordination with UN Environment/MAP and the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (Black Sea Commission), was endorsed.

#### ***Blackspot seabream fishery, including in the Alboran Sea***

77. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal for a recommendation establishing a minimum conservation reference size for blackspot seabream in the Mediterranean Sea.

78. A minimum size of 33 cm was proposed but it was decided that advice from the SAC on this technical measure was needed. The Commission, therefore, agreed to keep the proposal as pending, so that it would be revisited during the next session following a dedicated technical meeting between concerned countries, the inputs of which should be validated by the SAC. The pending proposal is reproduced in Appendix 19.

79. Subsequently, a new proposal for a recommendation regarding the management of blackspot seabream fisheries in the Alboran Sea (geographical subareas [GSAs] 1, 2, 3) was introduced by the delegate of the EU.

80. The aim of this proposal was to improve the exploitation pattern of blackspot seabream fisheries in the Alboran Sea while increasing scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge of those fisheries. The proposal would be implemented through the enforcement of initial transitional measures, while vital data required by the SAC to establish relevant reference points were collected. This would prepare the ground for a future management plan while reducing the risk that, in the absence of comprehensive and up-to-date scientific advice, the biomass level of the stock could drop below undesirable levels, with negative consequences for the fisheries.

81. The delegate of Morocco underlined that, for years, there had been attempts to provide advice on the status of this species, however, its data-poor situation required that a precautionary approach be taken. He underlined that the lack of data was related to the expense of ensuring adequate data collection, due to the high value of the species, and in this respect, Morocco had requested the assistance of the CopeMed project and the GFCM. He further remarked that, since it was targeted by small-scale fisheries, a socio-economic analysis of the impact of management alternatives on this species was also needed.

82. The delegate of the EU confirmed that the EU could provide support to the data collection programme for blackspot seabream fisheries in the Alboran Sea through the CopeMed project.

83. Following extensive discussions and consultations, the Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/2 on the management of blackspot seabream fisheries in the Alboran Sea (geographical subareas 1 to 3) for a two-year transition period, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 6.

#### ***Demersal fisheries in the Strait of Sicily***

84. The Commission took note of the results of the assessment of the measures in place through Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/4 establishing a multiannual management plan for the fisheries exploiting European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily, whereby a minimum 30 percent reduction was needed to facilitate an increase in biomass of both species. It was agreed that the management plan in place would be revised, as appropriate, at the next annual session on the basis of the advice provided by the SAC.

85. The delegate of Tunisia stressed the need to work on selectivity of fishing gear to support the reduction of fishing mortality of both species.

#### ***Small pelagic and demersal fisheries in the Adriatic Sea***

86. The Commission was reminded that CPCs were currently implementing emergency measures for small pelagic stocks in GSAs 17 and 18 until 2018, and that reference points were being reviewed by the SAC. It was agreed that the multiannual management plan in place for fisheries on small pelagic stocks would be revised at the next annual session based on the final advice formulated by the SAC.

87. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal for a recommendation regarding the establishment of a fisheries restricted area (FRA) in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit. This stemmed from a collaboration between involved CPCs based on the scientific advice provided by the SAC, which had identified the importance of this measure as it covered a key area in terms of essential fish habitats (EFH) for valuable species and vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs).

88. The Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/3 on the establishment of a fisheries restricted area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit in the Adriatic Sea, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 7.

89. The representative of MedReAct commended the Commission for taking this crucial step and urged strong control efforts within this FRA to ensure IUU fishing did not undermine the important milestones reached.

#### ***Eastern Mediterranean fisheries***

90. The Commission took note of the advice provided by the SAC regarding the eastern Mediterranean subregion, noting there was a need to apply data-limited stock (DLS) assessment methods to assess, among other species, the status of giant red shrimp (*Aristeomorpha foliacea*) and of blue and red shrimp (*Aristeus antennatus*). The need to advance towards a management plan for the deep-sea shrimp fishery, taking into account the recommendations stemming from the GFCM Working Group on VME (WGVME), was also acknowledged.

91. The delegate of Egypt underlined the importance of working on fishing gear technology in the eastern Mediterranean and referred to the work that was ongoing, with the assistance of the EastMed

project, towards increasing available data. He highlighted that the success of the scientific work in the subregion would depend on the successful collaboration between involved CPCs.

### ***Black Sea fisheries***

92. The delegate of the EU cautioned on the state of Black Sea priority stocks, with particular reference to turbot, piked dogfish and anchovy. She foresaw the need for management plans for these three species in the near future and prompted the WGBS to propose management measures at the next session of the Commission. Furthermore, she called for further joint efforts towards curbing IUU fishing. She also acknowledged the growing commercial importance of the invasive rapa whelk (*rapana venosa*).

93. The delegate of the EU introduced a new proposal for a recommendation on a management plan for turbot fisheries. She highlighted that this would represent an important step forward in advancing conservation efforts through scientific cooperation, joint control and monitoring activities. This recommendation would be implemented as a two-stage process with the first stage creating the tools for management and the reduction of IUU fishing (e.g. through quotas), and a second stage comprising a fully-fledged management plan, from 2020.

94. The delegate of Turkey supported the EU proposal regarding a management plan for turbot fisheries.

95. The delegate of Ukraine sought clarifications on the principles underlying the calculation of the national quotas for turbot used in the elaboration of the proposal, noting that the WGBS had provided different scientific advice. He reserved the position of his country in supporting the implementation of the measures stemming from the proposal and noted that Ukraine would inform the GFCM Secretariat in due course.

96. The delegate of the Russian Federation noted that the proposed quotas for turbot were not based on sufficient scientific data and did not take into account the zonal distribution of the species. Furthermore, these quotas had not been previously discussed in the remit of the WGBS. The delegate of the Russian Federation recalled that, pursuant to Part V of the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea, riparian countries should adopt proper management measures taking into account the best scientific evidence available, including through competent regional organizations. They could also determine species which may be caught, and fix catch quotas in relation to particular stocks or groups of stocks by their nationals. As the Russian Federation was currently undertaking a national survey, it would present the outcomes of such an initiative and inform the GFCM Secretariat about its decision before the end of 2017. Efforts would also be made to engage in further scientific work within the WGBS.

97. The delegate of Georgia recalled the position of her country that, although no industrial turbot fisheries were in place, unreported turbot catches from small-scale vessels should be accounted for when determining quotas. In addition, she underlined that coastal fishing was not reflected in catch figures and a comprehensive monitoring was lacking. Since the last WGBS meeting had made different recommendations for the calculation of quotas, she sought clarifications on the basis used to compile the figures in the recommendation.

98. The delegate of the EU explained that the proposal was based on the data of concerned CPCs. However, the door remained open to all riparian countries to submit official data on turbot in view of improving the stock assessment and, if appropriate, reviewing the catch limit in accordance with the proposed recommendation.

99. The Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4 on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29), the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 8.

100. The GFCM Chairperson recalled the importance of flexibility and openness towards current non-contracting parties to the GFCM in order to ensure their full involvement in the work of the GFCM in the Black Sea.

### ***Red coral***

101. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal for a recommendation establishing a regional adaptive management plan for the exploitation of red coral in the Mediterranean Sea, drafted in close collaboration with other concerned countries, particularly Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

102. The objective of this proposal was to increase scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge of the fisheries exploiting red coral and to take measures such as provisions for catch limitations and precautionary closures for areas dominated by undersized colonies. The recommendation called for the development of a research programme on red coral, stressing the need to dedicate special attention to such activities. It also foresaw the extended use of remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) for scientific purposes until 31 December 2020.

103. Following some amendments to the text by the EU and Tunisia, the Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/5 on the establishment of a regional adaptive management plan for the exploitation of red coral in the Mediterranean Sea, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 9.

### ***Fishing technology***

104. Following the request of the Tunisian delegate to reactivate the Working Group on Fishing Technology, prompted by the need to improve the management of the demersal fisheries in the Strait of Sicily, a GFCM resolution was drafted and proposed.

105. The delegates of Algeria, Egypt, the EU and Morocco fully supported the resolution and its adoption while stressing that it should be extended to the entire Mediterranean basin.

106. The Commission adopted the proposal as Resolution GFCM/41/2017/3 on the reactivation of the Working Group on Fishing Technology, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 15.

### ***European eel***

107. The critical status of the European eel stock in the Mediterranean was acknowledged as was the need to take action to improve the status of the stock. In this respect, the delegate of the EU, jointly with Tunisia, expressed the intention of proposing a management plan for European eel next year. This management plan should be based on the findings summarised within the framework of a dedicated working group on European eel.

### ***Data collection in support of advice***

108. The SAC Chairperson recalled that Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/2 on the progressive implementation of data submission in line with the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) had been adopted for one year only and that, following the necessary work during the intersession, a new proposal had been tabled. He also informed of the advice to provisionally apply quality checks, with preliminary thresholds, on the data submitted by CPCs to the GFCM Secretariat.

109. The delegate of the EU took the floor to underline the importance of endorsing the new recommendation, for the sake of periodical, sound data collection and submission. She mentioned that the type of data on European eel requested through this recommendation would eventually need to be revised at a later stage on the basis of the advice provided by the EIFAAC/ICES/GFCM Working Group on Eel (WGEEL).

110. The Commission decided to adopt the proposal as Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/6 on the submission of data on fishing activities in the GFCM area of application, as reproduced in Appendix 10. It also agreed to apply conformity, stability and consistency indicators for data quality checks (with preliminary thresholds) during the next intersessional period, in view of potentially incorporating them, on a permanent basis, in the data submission protocols.

111. Subsequently, the delegate of the EU introduced a proposal for a resolution on compliance with reporting of scientific data and policy procedures in the GFCM area of application. She stated that the proposal was aimed at improving transparency and promoting greater exchange of data among scientists and with other relevant institutions, in order to better support the formulation of scientific advice.

112. The delegates of Albania, Montenegro and Morocco referred to the practice of sharing data for stock assessment within the framework of the SAC, explaining that its working groups on stock assessment were producing quality work and proved effective in the provision of sound advice.

113. The delegate of Egypt referred to the importance of sharing data once validated, as per the process of the SAC, whose stock assessment forms are published after its session.

114. The delegate of Lebanon further stated that his country would not be in a position to share its raw data beyond the SAC working groups for stock assessment.

115. Following extensive discussions, and noting that no consensus was reached, the proposal was withdrawn and the SAC was requested to analyse this issue further during the intersession.

#### ***Small-scale and recreational fisheries***

116. The SAC Chairperson recalled that there was a proposal for a recommendation on measures concerning recreational fishing activities in the Mediterranean Sea pending from the fortieth session of the Commission. In light of the good work done by the Working Group on Small-Scale and Recreational Fisheries (WGSSF) and the SAC, the delegate of the EU, supported by the Turkish delegation, suggested to leave this proposal pending and come back at the next session with an enriched proposal, allowing for consideration of the progress made and activities carried out. She encouraged the SAC to carry out an evaluation of the impact of recreational fishing on key species, towards supporting a more precise assessment of these species.

117. The delegates of Egypt and Tunisia were also in agreement on devoting more time to work on the proposal, noting the need for further data and information on these fisheries and the necessity to adopt strong measures that reflected the reality of the region.

118. The Commission decided to keep the proposal pending, as reproduced in Appendix 20, so that it could be revisited at the next session.

#### ***Vulnerable marine ecosystems***

119. The SAC chairperson recalled the work done on VMEs during the intersession, which resulted in advice to adopt measures for their protection in the Mediterranean Sea, based on technical elements

regarding the establishment of a VME encounter protocol, the mapping of existing deep-sea fishing areas, and the establishment of an exploratory deep-sea bottom fishing protocol.

120. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal for a resolution regarding the establishment of a permanent working group on VMEs. She underlined that this resolution would reinforce the mandate of the working group and highlighted the importance of implementing scientific-based management measures in line with international commitments on VMEs.

121. The delegate of Morocco underlined that the Commission, at its fortieth session, had given mandate to an ad hoc working group to discuss appropriate measures with a view to ensuring the protection of VMEs, within the framework of the activities foreseen by the programme of work of the GFCM. Consequently, the establishment of a permanent working group would be a duplication.

122. Following some amendments to the text to clarify that the resolution consolidated a working group already created by the SAC, the Commission adopted the proposal by the EU as Resolution GFCM/41/2017/4 on a permanent working group on vulnerable marine ecosystems, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 16.

### ***Essential fish habitats***

123. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal for a resolution on the establishment of a network of EFH. This proposal was aligned with the commitments made through the MedFish4Ever Declaration to create protected areas.

124. The delegates of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia expressed their agreement with the proposal.

125. The Commission adopted the proposal Resolution GFCM/41/2017/5 on a network of essential fish habitats in the GFCM area of application, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 17.

### ***Shark fisheries***

126. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal for an amendment of Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/3 on fisheries management measures for conservation of sharks and rays in the GFCM area of application. She underlined that this recommendation was designed to align the existing recommendation to those being applied elsewhere.

127. The delegates of Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia while agreeing with the importance of setting management measures for the conservation of sharks and rays, all expressed the impossibility of fully and adequately evaluating the proposal, owing to its late submission.

128. The delegates of Shark Trust and Project Aware appreciated the opportunity to express their position regarding this important measure for sharks. They thanked the EU for tabling this proposal and seeking to strengthen the existing GFCM shark finning regulation. They recalled their previous intervention, in which they had urged the GFCM to take the opportunity to align its finning ban with best practice enforcement standards adopted in recent years by north Atlantic fisheries management organizations. They further reiterated the crucial importance of prohibiting within the GFCM, without exception, the removal of shark fins on-board vessels.

129. The Commission agreed to keep the proposal pending, as reproduced in Appendix 21, so that it could be revisited at the next session. .

### **Advice on compliance issues emanating from the CoC**

130. The CoC Chairperson outlined the advice stemming from the CoC relevant to fisheries management, which led to the formulation of proposals that would underpin the work of the Commission in complying with measures in place.

#### ***Regional Plan of Action for the Fight against IUU fishing (RPOA-IUU)***

131. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal on the RPOA-IUU based on the draft prepared by the GFCM Secretariat. He specified that the EU had made some minor formal changes to the text.

132. Following the integration of some amendments by the delegate of Turkey, the Commission adopted the RPOA-IUU as Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7 on a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 11.

#### ***International Maritime Organization number***

133. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal on the application of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) number. In this case too, his delegation had further refined a draft prepared by the GFCM Secretariat. He urged the Commission to adopt the proposal as a recommendation, consistent with the widespread practice of other RFMOs.

134. The delegates of Libya, Morocco and Tunisia agreed with the proposal subject to minor changes. However, they opted to adopt it as a resolution.

135. The representative of The Pew Charitable Trusts encouraged CPCs to align with the practice of other RFMOs and adopt a recommendation. She stressed the importance of such a vessel identifier in the fight against IUU fishing and called upon the GFCM to pay close attention to developments within the IMO.

136. The Commission adopted Resolution GFCM/41/2017/6 on the application of an International Maritime Organization number, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 18.

137. Following the adoption of the resolution the delegate of the EU stated that his delegation would request an annual evaluation by the CoC with a view to suggesting potential amendments to the text. Furthermore, he stressed that the GFCM should not depart from what other RFMOs were doing, urging a change of status from resolution to recommendation in due course.

138. The GFCM Secretariat recalled that the adoption of this instrument entailed a number of adjustments in the data fields of recommendations GFCM/33/2009/5 on the establishment of the GFCM regional fleet register and GFCM/33/2009/6 concerning the establishment of a GFCM record of vessels over 15 metres authorized to operate in the GFCM area of application, amending Recommendation GFCM/29/2005/2.

#### ***Joint inspection scheme***

139. The representative of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) presented the results of the joint inspection project on demersal trawlers in the Strait of Sicily titled “Rym Project” in the name of the Tunisian official who made significant efforts to implement it. He acknowledged the precious contribution by several CPCs in carrying out various inspections. Given the Mediterranean specificities, the project pointed to the need for a joint inspection scheme adapted to the GFCM.

140. The delegates of Egypt, Libya and Tunisia expressed their sincere gratitude to the EFCA for coordinating the project which had been of great use. However, some technical difficulties were reported in identifying fishing vessels having a catch corresponding to the percentage established for inspections. More resources would be needed in the future to involve other CPCs and undertake such projects in other subregions.

141. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal for a joint inspection scheme in the Strait of Sicily, drafted on the basis of the outcomes of the joint project and building upon the provisions of Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/4. Its ultimate goal was to contribute to combatting IUU fishing by developing the capabilities of the GFCM to enforce management measures in place.

142. The delegate of Tunisia referred to a number of technical aspects in the proposed scheme which, in his view, warranted a transitional phase before the Commission could adopt a full-fledged recommendation. More time was needed for some CPCs to be able to ensure full adherence with the scheme.

143. The delegate of the EU stood ready to acknowledge the need for a phased development of the scheme to the extent that its implementation would take place in 2018 and would be subject to an assessment on the same year. This would allow the EU to ensure the necessary resources supporting its implementation during the intersession.

144. The Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/8 on an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside the waters under national jurisdiction of the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16), the text of which is reproduced in Appendix 12.

145. The GFCM Chairperson was pleased to witness the continuous evolution of the GFCM that was now venturing into new areas. The inspection scheme would attest to a further level of maturity attained by the Commission.

#### ***Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)***

146. The Commission welcomed the steady progress in the implementation of a regional VMS and control systems and stated the importance of continuing further.

147. The GFCM Secretariat reported that, thanks to the pilot system, four Chinese fishing vessels had been recently sighted in the Mediterranean Sea. Subsequent to the activation of the mutual assistance, CPCs had been promptly informed on their presence. It was reported that these vessels had transited through the Mediterranean Sea and no fishing activities had been detected.

### **PROGRAMME OF WORK**

148. The Commission was informed of the work programme proposed by its subsidiary bodies during the intersession and emanating from the activities of the mid-term strategy as well as new decisions adopted during the session. The work programme was endorsed as follows:

#### **CAQ and WGBS (aquaculture)**

##### ***Working Group on Governance and Regulatory Aspects (WGGRA)***

- Continue the work to carry out a regional survey to assess social acceptability towards aquaculture development and prepare guidelines within the framework of the ongoing MedAID project on “Mediterranean Aquaculture Integrated Development”, funded under the EU Horizon 2020

programme, led by CIHEAM in partnership with the GFCM and FAO through Globefish (Products, Trade and Marketing Branch).

- Provide capacity-building and training in support to the implementation of AZAs and for the improvement of coastal planning for aquaculture.

#### ***Working Group on Environment and Aquatic Animal Health (WGEAA)***

- Prepare a guidance document on: i) risk analysis methods in aquaculture and data recording; ii) aquatic animal health and welfare; and iii) escapee and alien species in aquaculture.
- Carry out a regional survey on regulations, control and prevention of pathologies in aquaculture.
- Deepen the analysis of factors hindering the implementation of environmental monitoring for aquaculture activities and advance on the provision of implementation support to CPCs.

#### ***Working Group on Quality and Market of Aquaculture Products (WGQMA)***

- Develop standard methodologies and guidelines for market studies, taking into consideration biasing factors.

#### ***Aquaculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform (AMShP)***

- Support and promote cooperation for the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms at the national level.

#### ***Information System for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM)***

- Provide training and capacity-building to the national focal points and other staff involved in data collection (including market data) and processing.

#### ***WGBS***

- Develop a project to implement aquaculture demonstrative centers (ADCs) in the Black Sea including production modules and training activities.

#### ***Cooperation and technical assistance and other aquaculture priorities***

- Prepare information material on interactions between aquaculture and MPAs tailored to the Mediterranean and Black Sea region, in cooperation with IUCN.

#### **SAC and WGBS (fisheries)**

##### ***Regional issues***

- Produce the 2018 report on the State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries (SoMFi) using the most comprehensive, up-to-date and complete data and information.

##### ***Enhanced knowledge and strengthened advice***

- Develop a more comprehensive framework for management strategy evaluation, including uncertainty, socio-economics and fleet-based analyses.
- Implement harmonized scientific surveys-at-sea.
- Expand the collection of socio-economic fisheries data, including on small-scale fisheries, in line with the agreed survey methodology and roadmap for data collection.

##### ***Sustainable small-scale fisheries***

- Collaborate on in-country work and finalization of results for the FAO social protection study in the Mediterranean in order to provide decision-makers with further tools and best practices for supporting livelihoods in SSF while also improving natural resource management.

- Provide technical advice, through a preparatory meeting in advance of the High-level meeting on SSF, to support discussions towards the management of small-scale fisheries, based on the information submitted by countries.
- Test the use of monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) technology for small-scale fisheries through pilot cases, in coordination with SSF organizations.

#### *Sustainable recreational fisheries*

- Compile expert inputs and collect additional available information on recreational fisheries in order to complement the information received in the questionnaire on recreational fisheries, to be submitted for validation by countries.

#### *IUU fishing*

- Support the implementation of the roadmap for the estimation of IUU fishing.

#### *Interactions between fisheries and marine environment*

- Operationalize the discard monitoring programme through scientific observers on board.
- Work towards the assessment of the potential impacts of climate change on fisheries and ecosystems in order to develop a regional adaptation strategy.
- Compile information on the distribution, abundance and impact of non-indigenous species (NIS) on Mediterranean fisheries and ecosystems and propose a roadmap towards a NIS regional adaptation strategy.
- Establish a research programme on red coral in the Mediterranean Sea on the basis of terms of reference, including costs, services, needs and requirements in view of an eventual call for tender.
- Continue working for the protection of VMEs by reviewing and updating the technical elements regarding the establishment of a VME encounter protocol, the mapping of existing deep-sea fishing areas and the establishment of an exploratory deep-sea bottom fishing protocol.
- Work towards the establishment of a network of EFH in the Mediterranean Sea, by revising existing information on the distribution of essential fish habitats and sensitive habitats, identifying possible knowledge gaps and overcoming them through predictive modelling and mapping of habitat suitability.

#### *Subregional issues*

##### *Western Mediterranean*

- Organize a technical expert session on blackspot seabream, in order to examine the progress made on the actions suggested in the background document (SRC-WM, 2017), including preparatory bilateral Morocco-Spain technical work.

##### *Central Mediterranean*

- In the context of the implementation of surveys-at-sea, investigate nursery areas for European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily.

##### *Eastern Mediterranean*

- Perform a detailed analysis of catches and information by species towards a potential revision of the list of priority species in the eastern Mediterranean.

##### *Black Sea*

- Develop a stock identification project to investigate stock boundaries for priority species, especially turbot, anchovy, rapa whelk and piked dogfish.

## CoC (compliance)

- Implement the regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application.
- Further the phased development of a regional VMS and control systems through the ongoing regional pilot study and present such progress to the Working Group on VMS and related control systems.
- Support activities relating to the international day for the fight against IUU fishing.
- Organize training for inspectors and provide technical assistance to CPCs on the implementation of VMS and control systems.
- Identify policies having a positive impact in the fight against IUU fishing in the context of the ongoing cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) through the study “Combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing”.
- Implement a pilot project in the Black Sea, together with the EFCA, to establish a voluntary observation and inspection programme to ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures.

## Meetings

149. The Commission approved the following meetings<sup>1</sup>, some of which would be subject to human resource capacity, the application of any new administrative rules and circulars of the FAO and the availability of funds. Note was taken of the kind offer by some CPCs to host meetings of the subsidiary bodies, subject to confirmation by their competent authorities.

CAQ/WGBS MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION
Regional meeting to operationalize the strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture	13–15 March 2018	Turkey
ADC focus technical meeting in the Black Sea (3)		
WGGRA – Workshop on the importance of social acceptability for Mediterranean aquaculture development: the way forward (2)	25–29 August 2018	Montpellier, France
WGEAA – Workshop on risk analysis methods and data recording (e.g. on safety indicators, alien species, pathogens) (3)	2–5 October 2018	Italy (TBC)
WGGRA – Regional workshop on aquaculture governance and regulatory issues (3)		

<sup>1</sup> 1\* = autonomous budget (\*additional funds needed to cover participation), 2 = funding secured (through FWP and/or covered through other external initiatives), 3 = funding not yet secured.

<b>SAC/WGBS MEETINGS</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
Working Groups on Stock Assessment of Demersal (WGSAD) and Small Pelagic Species (WGSASP)	13–18 November 2017	FAO HQ, Rome, Italy
Sixth meeting of the Subregional group on stock assessment in the Black Sea (SGSABS)	4–9 December 2017	Batumi, Georgia
Working Group on vulnerable marine ecosystems (WGVME) (3)	27–28 February 2018	FAO HQ, Rome, Italy
Expert meeting on the formulation of advice on fisheries	1 March 2018	
Preparatory meeting on the High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries (3)	2 March 2018	
Expert meeting on non-indigenous species in the Eastern Mediterranean (3)	6–8 March 2018 (TBC)	Chania, Crete, Greece
Technical meeting on data-limited stocks (3)		
Technical meeting on deep-water red shrimp (3)		
Subregional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (SRC-EM) (1)*		
Expert meeting on the mitigation of interactions between predators and vulnerable species with fisheries (3)	20–23 March 2018	Málaga, Spain
Technical meeting on blackspot seabream (3)		
Subregional Committee for the Western Mediterranean (SRC-WM) (1)*		
Workshop on the assessment of management scenarios for Mediterranean case studies, including ad hoc session for small pelagic species in the Adriatic Sea (3)	9–13 April 2018	Croatia (location TBC)
Subregional Committee for the Adriatic Sea (SRC-AS) (1)*		
Working group on Fishing Technology (WGFiT) (3)	16–18 April 2018	Tunis, Tunisia (TBC)
Workshop on the management of European eel (3)		
Expert meeting on non-indigenous species in the Central Mediterranean (3)	19–20 April 2018	
Subregional Committee for the Central Mediterranean (SRC-CM) (1)*		
High-Level Conference on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture (3)	8–9 June 2018	Sofia, Bulgaria
Twentieth session of the SAC (1)	26–29 June 2018	Marrakech, Morocco
Workshop on the assessment of management measures for Black Sea case studies (3)	10–13 July 2018	Burgas, Bulgaria
Seventh meeting of the WGBS (1)		

<b>SAC/WGBS MEETINGS</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
Working Groups on Stock Assessment of Demersal (WGSAD) and Small Pelagic Species (WGSASP) (1)	19–23 November 2018	FAO HQ, Rome, Italy
Seventh meeting of the Subregional group on stock assessment in the Black Sea (SGSABS) (1)*	26–30 November 2018	TBD
Working Group on Red Coral (WKREDCORAL)	2019 (TBD)	TBD

<b>COC MEETINGS</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
Working group on IUU fishing, including a session of the CoC on the clarification and identification process (3)	23–27 April 2018	Beirut, Lebanon
Working group on VMS and control systems (3)		
Working group on the development of integrated MCS for turbot in the Black Sea (3)		
Twelfth session of the CoC	5–6 July 2018	Spain (location TBC)

<b>GFCM MEETINGS (TRANSVERSAL MEETINGS)</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries (2)	25–26 September 2018	Malta (location TBC)
Forty-second session of the Commission (1)	22–26 October 2018	Bucharest, Romania
GFCM Forum on Fisheries Science (2)	10–14 December 2018	FAO HQ, Rome, Italy

150. The GFCM Executive Secretary intervened to draw the attention of the Commission to the high number of meetings and activities, among which some would not be possible to carry out without the support of voluntary financial contributions. Furthermore, he remarked that this intensive schedule posed challenges for planning and stressed that some practical readjustments would need to be made in the course of the intersession to make possible their execution.

151. The delegate of Lebanon requested that budget information be provided in the future to support deliberations on the programme of work. The GFCM Executive Secretary, however, noted that funding in some cases is provided through extrabudgetary contributions and therefore, for some activities, a budget could only be provided once extrabudgetary funding would be secured.

152. The Commission also welcomed the proposal by the delegate of Turkey to host the Working Group on the allocation of the total allowable catch (TAC) for Black Sea turbot, foreseen for 2019, back-to-back with the eighth meeting of the WGBS.

153. Commenting on the implementation of the mid-term strategy, the Commission underlined the importance of coordination. In particular, with respect to surveys-at-sea, the promotion of synergies

with other relevant actors, especially the FAO regional projects, was underlined, together with the importance of coordinated data sharing and provision. Furthermore, the delegate of Egypt emphasized the crucial role of partner organizations in the implementation of the mid-term strategy, particularly Target 4, recalling that the mid-term strategy was a joint effort and that consistency should be ensured among ongoing activities.

154. The Commission supported the conclusion of the WGSSF to divide the working group into two groups, one for small-scale fisheries and one for recreational fisheries, in line with the terms of reference reproduced in Appendix 22. The delegates of Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia, in particular, voiced their support for this proposal, noting the different characteristics of these types of fisheries. Furthermore, the delegate of the EU suggested that the GFCM Executive Secretary chair the new WGSSF.

## **REPORT OF THE COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE**

155. The CoC Chairperson outlined the advice stemming from the CoC as relating to the report of the eleventh session of the Committee, on the basis of documents GFCM:41/2017/4 and GFCM:41/2017/Inf.8.

156. The Commission decided that no CPCs were identified as non-compliant for 2017. However, since the clarification and identification process should continue, the Commission also decided on the automatic identification, in 2018, of all CPCs that – during the next intersession – would not transpose GFCM recommendations into national legislation or not transmit data provided one of the following conditions was met: i) they did not request technical assistance to rectify the situation of non-compliance; ii) if technical assistance was requested, they did not facilitate its provision; iii) they did not provide an adequate justification for the situation of non-compliance; iv) they did not provide evidence that a process was ongoing at the national level for the transposition of relevant GFCM recommendations into national legislation. It was also agreed that CoC should propose a permanent network of technical assistance relating to compliance, to be established by the Commission at its next session.

157. The updated GFCM IUU list was introduced, based on document GFCM:41/2017/Inf.16.

158. The delegate of Egypt informed that the vessel Al'Amir Muhammad, included in the updated GFCM IUU list, had been sanctioned under the national law due to IUU fishing in the Strait of Sicily.

159. The delegate of the EU requested the deletion of the fishing vessels Tchaw (previously known as Viking), which had been dismantled, and Octopus 1, which had been sunk by Indonesia.

160. The Commission adopted the updated GFCM IUU list and requested the GFCM Secretariat to publish it.

161. Recalling the proposed declaration of an International Day for the fight against IUU fishing (ID-IUU), the Commission recommended that CPCs ensure coordination with their permanent missions in New York to make sure that the United Nations General Assembly proclaims the ID-IUU.

## **ACTIVATION OF THE REVIEW PANEL**

162. The delegate of Tunisia drew the attention of the Commission to his request for the activation of the Review Panel, pursuant to the procedure agreed upon at the session on the Review Panel (FAO headquarters, January 2017).

163. The GFCM Executive Secretary reported that, subsequent to the receipt of the request by Tunisia, the GFCM Secretariat had informed all CPCs accordingly and added an item to the agenda of the forty-first session, as instructed.

164. The delegate of Turkey explained that, should the activation of the Review Panel come into question in relation to advice provided by the WGBS, this would not be acceptable since a specific mechanism for the Black Sea in support to decision-making was already established within the GFCM. On the other hand, the potential review of advice provided by SAC should be discussed by all members of the GFCM. Consequently, were the Commission to decide on the activation of the Review Panel, Turkey would not accept the selection of five contracting parties only as members of this mechanism. Participation should not be restricted and, bearing in mind the subregional approach to fisheries management, it might be opportune to consider one review panel for each Mediterranean subregion so that contracting parties could participate on the basis of their interest.

165. The delegate of the EU indicated that it was still premature to activate the Review Panel.

166. Following these interventions, the delegate of Tunisia withdrew his request. However, he stressed the importance of the Review Panel and invited the Commission to consider its activation in due course.

## **EIGHTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE**

### **Report on administrative and financial issues**

167. The eighth session of the CAF was called to order by its Chairperson, Mr Hachemi Missaoui, who delivered a presentation on administrative and financial issues, on the basis of document GFCM:41/2017/5. The Chairperson also informed the Committee on aspects related to the functioning of the GFCM Secretariat (e.g. staffing, financial and administrative issues, IT and information systems).

168. The Chairperson summarized the financial situation, indicating that the annual contributions received in 2016 from CPCs amounted to 93.75 percent of the adopted autonomous budget, in addition to arrears received from Cyprus, Greece, Japan, Romania and Tunisia. He informed that the cash accrual totalled US\$768 073 and that accumulated pending contributions for the fiscal years 2005–2016 amounted to US\$762 593. CPCs were reminded of their obligation to ensure payment of contributions during the first weeks of the year, while arrears should be settled as soon as possible. After illustrating expenditures by chapter of the autonomous budget and extrabudgetary funds, the Chairperson showed that the balance was positive in both cases.

169. Noting that only the contributions received during the financial year were included in the report, the delegates of Lebanon and Romania intervened to specify that their respective contributions for 2016 had been paid at the beginning of 2017.

170. The delegate of Libya regretted that his country had not been able to pay its recent contributions due to the national political situation but specified it was committed to fulfil its obligations as was the case before the current difficulties.

171. The Committee agreed that all arrears, positive balances deriving from favourable exchange rates from closed projects and any other unspent financial resources would – with immediate effect – be transferred to the GFCM working capital fund at the end of each year, to be used as a reserve.

172. The Committee noted the positive outcomes of the subregional approach, remarking on the increased participation, the better integration of advice from all stakeholders, and the alignment with

the work of FAO regional projects, among other aspects. It also noted the progress in the establishment of technical units in Bulgaria for the WGBS, Lebanon for the SRC-EM and Spain for the SRC-WM. The opportunity to further evaluate the outcomes of the subregional approach by extending its feasibility phase was welcomed.

### **GFCM budget and contributions by contracting parties for 2017–2019**

173. The CAF Chairperson presented, on the basis of document GFCM/41/2017/6, a firm budget proposal for 2018 and a tentative budget for 2019 for the consideration of the Committee.

174. The Commission took note of the extrabudgetary contribution of the Mava Foundation, amounting to approximately EUR 400 000, to support the implementation of a project on the monitoring and mitigation of incidental catches of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean, developed in the context of Target 4 of the mid-term strategy. As part of a total contribution of about EUR 3.2 million over three years, the action would be implemented in collaboration with the project partners, namely ACCOBAMS, BirdLife International, the Mediterranean Association to save Sea Turtles (MEDASSET), UN Environment/MAP Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (UN Environment/MAP RAC/SPA) and IUCN-Med.

175. The delegate of the EU referred to the importance of ensuring sufficient financial support to the implementation of the fisheries and aquaculture strategies in the coming years. In this regard, she announced that the European Commission would participate in these efforts via a grant of EUR 3.7 million. Nonetheless, she specified that the autonomous budget should not be increased from the previous year.

176. The delegate of Libya mentioned that the calculations of the Libyan contribution were based on estimates that did not reflect the actual situation of his country and hoped that discussions could continue with the GFCM Executive Secretary towards resolving the issue of Libya's arrears.

177. The Committee welcomed the creation of the participation fund and decided that 40 percent of it would be used to support countries hosting statutory sessions in covering meeting expenses, and the remaining 60 percent would support the participation of one representative per country in such meetings, with priority given – considering the limited sum currently available – to developing countries.

178. After consultations among delegations, it was agreed to keep the budget at the 2017 levels, and the GFCM Secretariat performed the related adjustments accordingly. The 2018 budget, amounting to US\$2 532 162, was adopted as shown in Appendix 23(1). Expected contributions due by contracting parties are presented in Appendix 23(2). This budget included the recruitment of a Senior Fishery Resources Officer (P-5), together with the recruitment of a Programme/Executive Associate (G-6/7) and a Security Guard (G-2/3).

### **Election of the CAF Bureau**

179. The GFCM Executive Secretary referred to Rule VII of the GFCM Rules of Procedure, applying to the election of the Bureaus of GFCM subsidiary bodies, whereby members could serve for a two-year term, renewable once, and should be elected among delegates or alternates attending the session at which the election took place.

180. In the absence of candidates for the CAF Bureau, currently composed of Mr Hachemi Missaoui (Tunisia) as Chairperson, Mr Aleksandar Joksimovic (Montenegro), as first Vice-Chairperson, and Ms Mimoza Cobani (Albania) as second Vice-Chairperson, the Committee unanimously agreed to

postpone the election to its next session. The delegate of Albania informed that the second Vice-Chairperson would be retiring shortly and the Committee consequently elected, after her candidature, Ms Nadia Bouhafs (Algeria) as second Vice-Chairperson of the CAF.

### **ELECTION OF THE GFCM BUREAU AND ENDORSEMENT OF THE BUREAU OF THE CAQ, WGBS, COC AND CAF**

181. The Commission paid tribute to the outstanding work carried out by the outgoing GFCM Bureau as well as the outgoing Bureaus of the CAQ, WGBS, CoC and CAF, noting the progress made on several fronts.

182. The GFCM Executive Secretary referred to Rule VII of the GFCM Rules of Procedure, applying to the election of the Bureaus of GFCM subsidiary bodies, whereby members could serve for a two-year term, renewable once, and should be elected among delegates or alternates attending the session at which the election took place.

183. The Commission unanimously endorsed the renewed CAQ Bureau, composed of Mr Ramón De La Figuera Morales (Spain) as Chairperson, Mr Houssam Hamza (Tunisia), as first Vice-Chairperson, and Mr Özerdem Maltaş (Turkey) as second Vice-Chairperson and the renewed mandate of the WGBS Bureau composed of Mr Simion Nicolaev (Romania) as Coordinator, Mr Galin Nikolov (Bulgaria) as Vice-Coordinator and Mr İlhan Aydın (Turkey) as second Vice-Coordinator and the renewed CoC Bureau composed of Mr Randall Caruana (Malta) as Chairperson, Mr Arian Palluqi (Albania) as first Vice-Chairperson, and Ms Bouchra Haoujar (Morocco) as second Vice-Chairperson. It also endorsed the new composition of the CAF Bureau.

184. In the absence of candidates for the GFCM Bureau, currently composed of Mr Stefano Cataudella (Italy) as Chairperson, Ms Esra Fatma Denizci (Turkey) as first Vice-Chairperson, and Mr Madani Ali Madani (Egypt) as second Vice-Chairperson, the Commission unanimously agreed to postpone the election to its next session.

185. In view of the elections of several Bureaus, including that of the Commission, in 2018, the Executive Secretary was requested to promote the active involvement of all CPCs in preparing for the nomination of the new members, by circulating a specific call for candidates and through bilateral consultations, as appropriate. This would serve to attract highly qualified candidates and secure strong chairpersons for the Commission and its subsidiary bodies during the challenging implementation of the fisheries and aquaculture strategies.

### **ANY OTHER MATTERS**

186. The delegate of the EU, supported by the delegations of Algeria and Tunisia, noted the extremely important role played by the FAO regional projects in supporting the implementation of relevant activities and expressed the wish that the results of their activities be regularly presented at the annual session of the Commission.

187. Given the many issues to be tackled in a limited amount of time during the session, the Commission agreed that a report on the work of the regional projects would be submitted before the session and that their main activities would be presented during a dedicated side event.

188. The Commission repeatedly thanked the Government of Montenegro for the outstanding hospitality as well as for the excellent organization of the forty-first session and the invaluable support provided to ensure its smooth conduct.

189. Gratitude was expressed to the GFCM Secretariat for the tireless work done in the preparation of and during the session.

#### **DATE AND PLACE OF THE FORTY-SECOND SESSION**

190. The Commission took note of the kind invitation made by the delegation of Romania to host the forty-second session in 2018.

#### **ADOPTION OF THE REPORT**

191. The report, including its appendixes, was adopted on 20 October 2017.

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- 2) **List of participants**
- 3) **List of documents**
- 4) **Statements pronounced at the forty-first session of the Commission**
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- 6) **Recommendation GFCM /41/2017/2 on the management of blackspot seabream fisheries in the Alboran Sea (geographical subareas 1 to 3) for a two-year transition period** (reference language: French)
- 7) **Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/3 on the establishment of a fisheries restricted area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit in the Adriatic Sea** (reference language: English)
- 8) **Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4 on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29)** (reference language: English)
- 9) **Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/5 on the establishment of a regional adaptive management plan for the exploitation of red coral in the Mediterranean Sea** (reference language: French)
- 10) **Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/6 on the submission of data on fishing activities in the GFCM area of application** (reference language: English)
- 11) **Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7 on a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application** (reference language: English)
- 12) **Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/8 on an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside the waters under national jurisdiction of the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16)** (reference language: English)
- 13) **Resolution GFCM/41/2017/1 on a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture** (reference language: English)
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- 15) **Resolution GFCM/41/2017/3 on the reactivation of the Working Group on Fishing Technology** (reference language: English)
- 16) **Resolution GFCM/41/2017/4 on a permanent working group on vulnerable marine ecosystems** (reference language: French)
- 17) **Resolution GFCM/41/2017/5 on a network of essential fish habitats** (reference language: French)
- 18) **Resolution GFCM/41/2017/6 on the application of an International Maritime Organization number** (reference language: French)
- 19) **Pending proposal for a GFCM recommendation on the establishment of a minimum conservation reference size for blackspot seabream in the Mediterranean Sea** (reference language: French)
- 20) **Pending proposal for a GFCM recommendation on measures concerning recreational fishing activities in the Mediterranean Sea** (reference language: English)

- 21) **Pending proposal for a GFCM recommendation on fisheries management measures for the conservation of sharks and rays in the GFCM area of application, amending Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/3** (reference language: English)
- 22) **Terms of reference for selected activities**
  - 1) Working Group on Small-Scale Fisheries (WGSSF)
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- 23) **GFCM autonomous budget for 2018**
  - 1) GFCM autonomous budget for 2018
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**Agenda**

1. Opening and arrangements of the session
2. Progress on cooperation matters
3. Report on intersessional activities in 2016–2017
4. Progress in the implementation of the mid-term strategy towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, including in relation to the Malta Ministerial Declaration
5. Draft GFCM strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture
6. Management of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture
7. Programme of work for the period 2017–2019
8. Report of the Compliance Committee (CoC)
9. Activation of the Review Panel
10. Eighth session of the Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF)
11. Election of the GFCM Bureau and endorsement of the Bureau of the CAQ, WGBS, CoC and CAF
12. Any other matters
13. Date and place of the forty-second session
14. Review and adoption of the report

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**Statements pronounced at the forty-first session of the Commission**

**(in original language)**

**H.E Milutin Simovic**

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Montenegro**

Ladies and gentlemen,

dear participants,

It is my honor and pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the Government of Montenegro, to the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, which is organized for the first time in Montenegro.

I already had the opportunity to greet you in this same place seven years ago, when Montenegro hosted a meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee of GFCM which, along with the other meetings of working groups organized in recent years in Montenegro, was an introduction into one this big event for us.

The fisheries sector in Montenegro has an economic, ecological, sociological and cultural role. The largest part of fisheries represents coastal or small-scale commercial fisheries, which is done here for centuries, in a specific way. Bearing in mind such a long tradition, this type of fisheries must be preserved and cherished for future generations, as an expression of peculiarity and specificity of Montenegrin fisheries.

The lack of favorable financial resources, as well as continuously complex overall social and economic situation, are the key reasons for the insufficient development of Montenegrin fisheries sector. Montenegrin fishing fleet consists mostly of vessels with an average age of 40 years, equipped with outdated equipment which primarily should be renewed for the safety of fishermen on vessels, but also for the purpose of traceability and health safety of fish products.

The share of the catch from Montenegrin small pelagic fisheries in total catch on the Adriatic Sea is more than negligible and amounts to less than 1% of the total catch. The lack of valid and well-organized statistics on catches and landings of pelagic fish also represents one unrealistically small annual catch of these species. Montenegro still does not have landing data from the first landing places, so the only reliable are biological data, as well as data from scientific research expeditions. Therefore, we expect the fishing sector with such capacities and level of development, equally in Montenegro and other similar countries, to be treated differently from fisheries sectors in the areas with certain presence of overcapacity and overfishing.

The work of General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, as well as all the other similar initiatives whose main objective is real and profound reform of fisheries management, has our full support, because we consider it the only way to contribute to the overall development of this sector. As always, we are ready to participate in all activities related to sustainable fisheries in the Mediterranean, especially in the Adriatic Sea.

We all have to be responsible in the implementation of conservation measures, especially for the resources of highly migratory species, but also for the other resources, and to be responsible to the need to develop our fishing fleets up to the level of responsible and sustainable catch, respecting the most demanding standards of selectivity of fishing gear. Montenegro has significantly increased the level of activities in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, in accordance with recommendations and measures of the GFCM and the EU in the fight against this type of fisheries. On

this plan, the obligations and responsibilities of the competent state institutions are recognized, with the significant participation and contribution of non-governmental organizations, professional and general public.

I would like to emphasize that we absolutely understand the current alarming situation in the state of resources in the Mediterranean, but in the process of adopting certain measures and recommendations, especially those related to limitations of investments in the modernization of fishing fleet, I recall that the specificity of the country has to be taken into account, and the level of development of the sector in particular. As one very important argument for this requirement, I have to mention the example of Montenegro which is currently only on 30% of the maximum fishing fleet capacity in relation to the available fish resources in its territorial waters.

This is why I expect an understanding of the need of both Montenegro and all similar countries to enable this sector to give one realistically possible contribution to our national economies through creating new jobs, hiring young people in particular and achieving a better status of fishermen, but also the need of this sector to provide added value to the tourist offer of our countries.

Therefore, the message is to exploit our fish resources responsibly, but also to allow and help the development of the fisheries sector, respecting the most stringent requirements of sustainability.

Through the establishment of the Directorate for Fisheries within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development at the beginning of this year, and by employing new people, we are determined to develop this sector to the level which belongs to a Mediterranean country, responsibly manage such sensitive resources and prepare the sector to be competitive on the open market at the same time.

The work on further harmonization of domestic with the EU legislation has been continued, as well as the implementation of GFCM recommendations. In addition to this, we are very actively engaged in the preparation of projects for the EU pre-accession funds, and we are also in the final negotiations with the World Bank for the soon beginning of a new project in which the support to the fisheries sector will have a significant place. The preparation and realization of bilateral projects is also in progress.

Speaking of the resources that we have at our disposal, priceless scientific and administrative assistance is provided to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Institute for Marine Biology from the FAO AdriaMed project, whose partner Montenegro has been since 2004. Participation in this project gave a chance to Montenegrin scientists and administration to participate deeply and very seriously in the work of all GFCM bodies, exchange data, do the evaluations and give guidelines for the development of responsible and long-term sustainable fisheries in the Adriatic Sea and the Mediterranean in general.

Finally, only by responsible and rational management, respecting the principles of nature and respecting the law, we will be able to harvest the food from the sea for a long time, without disturbing the biological balance.

Montenegro will remain a reliable partner in the process of sustainable management of fish resources.

Finally, once again I want to wish you a nice stay in Montenegro, as well as a successful work in the coming days.

**Árni M. Mathiesen**

**Assistant Director-General, FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department**

At the outset, I'd like to welcome all participants, including high-level representatives, who came numerous to the 41st session of the GFCM, and express my gratitude to them. A special thanks to the hosting country, Montenegro, that has a strong cooperation with FAO in the context of the ongoing Country Programming Framework 2015-2019. We are pleased to see strong commitment by Montenegro to the work of FAO, including in connection with the Strategic Objective of the Organization, and we remain focused on country priorities identified by Montenegro. This includes fisheries and aquaculture through the work of the GFCM;

Today, 16 October 2017, marks the celebration of the World Food Day. This is by far the most important FAO sponsored celebration within the United Nations System. I would be remiss without recalling the importance of this day for the international community. Hunger continues to threaten sustainable development of many nations and FAO is at the forefront of the fight against this scourge. We are particularly concerned with food loss and waste, including fish loss and waste. FAO currently estimates that roughly 35% of fish and seafood is wasted, with 8% of fish caught globally thrown back into the sea. In most cases, this fish is dead, dying or badly damaged. We need to halt this negative trend as this is our collective responsibility. RFMOs have an important role to play in this respect;

The GFCM has pledged last year at its 40th session to revert the negative trend in the exploitation of most commercially exploited stocks at Mediterranean and Black Sea level. To this end, a visionary multiannual strategy has been adopted which is fully consistent with SDG 14 targets and is contributing to accelerate progress towards these targets at the regional level. To the best of my knowledge, the GFCM is the only RFMO that has adopted such a strategy.

Last June I participated in NY at the Oceans Conference on SDG 14, together with the FAO Director General and the GFCM Executive Secretary, among others. This conference recognized the key contribution that is expected from regional organizations in meeting SDG 14 related targets. These include Target 14.4. that calls upon countries to reduce overfishing, end IUU fishing and bring about the sustainable management of fisheries worldwide;

These calls have been echoed in Malta 10 days ago at the Our Oceans Conference, where I also participated together with the FAO Director General and the GFCM Executive Secretary. I was pleased to see that among those commitments presented during this conference there was also the mid-term strategy of the GFCM. This means that such instrument has been recognized at the regional level and beyond. As an indicator of its importance I'd like to refer to the Malta Ministerial Declaration MedFish4Ever, adopted last March under the auspices of the EU. I praise such an initiative because the Mediterranean Sea requires strong political willingness to address the many issues that affect fisheries and aquaculture;

The FAO is pleased to acknowledge progress being made by the GFCM to enhance cooperation in the Black Sea region as well. Last October, a high-level conference was organized under the stewardship of the GFCM in Bucharest. This conference was attended by high-level representatives from all the riparian countries as well as countries in the Black Sea area and resulted in the adoption of the Bucharest Declaration. This marks a formidable milestone in that there is common agreement among Black Sea countries on the need to work together in the interest of their fisheries and aquaculture sector. I'd like in particular to call upon those riparian countries that are yet to become Members to the GFCM to ratify the GFCM Agreement and join the Commission. I am well aware that Georgia and Ukraine have attained Cooperating non-Contracting Party status in the past and I am also aware of the ongoing cooperation between the GFCM and the Russian Federation. I believe though that efforts should be made towards full membership. The same applies, for the Mediterranean region, to Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is also a Cooperating non-Contracting Party to the GFCM. This Commission is also expected to grant the status of Cooperating non-Contracting Party to the Republic of Moldova. This is yet another token of the important work by the GFCM in strengthening cooperation;

Allow me also to underline the strong contribution that the FAO Regional Projects (AdriaMed, CopeMed, EastMed, MedSudMed) are giving to support sustainability of Mediterranean fisheries. This network of project has been in place for many years now and it has considerably underpinned the work of the GFCM at the country level. With the mid-term strategy in place the role of the projects become even more important and I do encourage strong coordination and synergies between the GFCM Secretariat and the projects. In this regard, I am glad to see that such coordination is already ongoing and that a number of country missions have been fielded together by the GFCM Secretariat and EastMed last month. This should become a trend and a reference point given the Organization's policy to act as one. In this regard, I am positive that FAO offices in the region will also lend support to ongoing endeavors. FAO is implementing a strong coordination policy with regional offices in the interest of all Members to the Organization;

I wish you success during this week and I am positive you will work with resolve to take important decisions for the management of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, in line with the commitments you have already agreed upon for the sake of the Mediterranean and Black Sea region.

**Stefano Cataudella**  
**Chairperson, General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean**

Excellencies,

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, H.E. Milutin Simovic,

FAO ADG-FI, Mr Arni Mathiesen,

GFCM Executive Secretary, Mr Abdellah Srour,

Dear national delegates,

Representatives of partner organizations and civil society organizations,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Colleagues,

I am honoured to be here in Montenegro today and I would like to add my voice in welcoming all of you here. I'd like to thank in particular the hosting country, Montenegro, which has made enormous efforts to organize the 41st session of the Commission, including the 8th session of CAF, in this scenic and beautiful setting. This has surely contributed to attracting such a high number of participants and I am positive that each of you will be instrumental in ensuring successful outcomes for this meeting.

Last year in Malta, the GFCM decided to empower itself to take action against the dire status of fish stocks in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea via a five year strategy. This instrument will guide our actions until 2020 against the background of global commitments stemming from the SDG 14, the FAO Strategic Objectives and the Aichi Targets. Our final goal is to contribute actively to the 2030 Agenda thus supporting sustainable development within the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region. Thanks to the mid-term strategy we now have in place a clear framework and specific targets that are to be met if we want to revert the overexploitation of fisheries resources in the interest of present and future generations. As you are aware, the targets span from the better assessment of fish stocks to the curbing of IUU fishing and the promotion of sustainable small-scale fisheries. Most importantly, we are now pursuing a holistic approach whereby all actions will be taken harmoniously and coherently.

An important aspect of the mid-term strategy that should not be overlooked is the recognition that it has already obtained at the regional level and beyond. Following the 40th session of the Commission, the High-Level Conference towards Enhanced Cooperation on Black Sea Fisheries and Aquaculture resulted in the adoption of the Bucharest Declaration. This declaration calls upon countries in the Black Sea area to work together in fisheries and aquaculture related matters in the context of the mid-term strategy. A similar plea was made for the Mediterranean Sea last March in Malta when the MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration was adopted as a follow up to the Venice Declaration. This instrument, too, acknowledges that the mid-term strategy is the point of departure for all fellow nations in the Mediterranean towards the greater sustainability of fisheries. Together, these declarations point to a strong political support throughout the GFCM area of application that is possibly unprecedented. In my experience, political support is the foundation of any serious effort and the one we are undertaking to save the fisheries in the region is most definitely a serious one. Let's not forget that the overexploitation rate is currently assessed at roughly 90%.

This week we will also have an opportunity to consider the adoption of a germane mid-term strategy for aquaculture. This sector remains a pillar of sustainable development and a strategic ally to sustainable fisheries. If we succeed in increasing the productivity of aquaculture and supplying our markets with more farmed products, we will remove significant pressure from our marine fisheries. To this end, important actions have to be taken in several domains, from the administrative and bureaucratic domain to the technical one. When I think of the future of aquaculture in our region the need for easier and less cumbersome procedures for the issuance of licences comes to mind. Similarly, I understand that without modern technologies that can help us to farm the species which are in demand on national

markets the sector will always lag behind. The GFCM has done important work in the past on indicators, allocated zones for aquaculture and market access. This has to become the basis for a deeper understanding of needs and priorities, as highlighted in the proposed mid-term aquaculture strategy. We also have the outcomes of the aquaculture task force, established two years ago, which will support us further.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Colleagues,

On the very celebration of the World Food Day we are gathered here to discuss the future of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture. These sectors, together, contribute significantly to the food supply in this region. The issues before us are therefore of the utmost importance and I am glad of the coincidence between the opening of our session and the World Food Day. We should not forget that by committing to more resilient and productive fisheries we will live up to the expectations that exist within the United Nations system, as well as among the people, to deliver a world without hunger. We have the moral obligation to take on this challenge and do as much as we can. The GFCM will not be able to make it alone, though. In addition to the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, I'd like to underline the contribution that the FAO Regional Projects AdriaMed, CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed provide in supporting the work of the GFCM. I look forward to seeing better synergies between the work of the projects and that of the GFCM, given the common challenges we are expected to tackle. Similarly, all the organizations that are present here today, most of which entered into a memorandum of understanding with the GFCM, have also a critical role to play. The fully-encompassing nature of the mid-term strategy will require concerted actions, close coordination and constant liaison so that everyone will contribute in the remit of its competence and mandate. In this respect, I would like to thank also the donors that are contributing to the work of the GFCM, namely the EU - that had made a special effort to support -, as well as Croatia, France, Italy, Monaco and Spain. These countries have all made extra-budgetary contributions to the work of the GFCM or that of the FAO Regional Projects, or both.

Before concluding, allow me to voice my concern for the administrative burden that is currently faced by the GFCM. The number of rules in place within the FAO continues to increase and this is causing unnecessary delays in conjunction with the smooth functioning of the GFCM Secretariat. I strongly believe in the importance of rules for strong organizational performance, but I would also like to recall that, as stated in the past by the Finance Committee of the FAO, the FAO should make a genuine effort to remove all obstacles that might hamper the operations of its Article XIV bodies. The GFCM, being an Article XIV body, has a special character which emanates from its constitutive agreement that must be recognized. Financial and operational autonomy of the GFCM must be ensured and I rely on the FAO to facilitate this process. In light of the great challenges that the Commission now faces there cannot be hurdles that might impact the daily routine of the GFCM Secretariat. I rely also on the Contracting Parties to the GFCM, which are also Contracting Parties to the FAO, to convey this important message to the organization.

I thank you all for your attention and I wish you success in your endeavour.

**Karmenu Vella**  
**EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries**  
**European Commission**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today.

Earlier this year we signed the "MedFish4Ever" Declaration in Malta, and 5 months before that we signed the Bucharest declaration for the Black Sea.

Neither would have been possible without your excellent work and ambition. The countries involved, industry, NGOs and, of course, the GFCM Secretariat, all came together, united in a common aim: safeguarding the sustainable use of fisheries resources, protecting the marine environment and reinforcing regional cooperation.

The MedFish4Ever Declaration has now been signed by 16 countries. It is our common roadmap for the next ten years. A roadmap fully in line with the GFCM 2017-2020 Strategy, which was also adopted this year.

With that, the time for signing declarations is over. The framework is in place. Now it's time to act, to turn words into reality and to deliver on our commitments.

For that to happen, the role of GFCM is paramount. Without your backing, all our nice words will remain just that.

That is why the European Union intends to make the most of this GFCM session. This year we are tabling a series of recommendations, recommendations that will allow us to better manage key stocks, that will strengthen the fight against IUU fishing and that will promote the development of sustainable aquaculture, all while protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems and fishing restricted areas.

The European Union's proposals are a sign of our unwavering commitment to the declarations all of us have signed.

In that spirit, I count on your support, and let me reassure you: the European Union will continue our backing for GFCM – financially and otherwise. Just as we stand ready to support our non-EU neighbours.

Let me close with a word of thanks to our friends from Tunisia, who are organising a follow-up Ministerial Conference on MedFish4Ever in 2019, and to our friends from GFCM and Bulgaria, for organising a follow-up Ministerial Conference on the Bucharest Declaration next year.

You can count on my support for both. The momentum is high. Let's keep building.

I wish you all a successful Annual Session

**Roland Kristo**

**Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Albania**

Dear Mr Chairman,

Dear Mr Executive Secretary,

Distinguish delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Albania and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, I would like to emphasize the great interest the Albanian government has expressed for the GFCM and its willingness to further strengthen this cooperation.

Also, I would like to thank you very much the hosting country for the excellent hospitality and the GFCM Secretariat, for the organization of this 41st session of the Commission. Albania is very pleased to be in Budva and reiterate its support to the common work on Mediterranean fisheries and aquaculture;

GFCM as a regional fisheries management organization has made a major contribution to the fisheries and aquaculture sector in Albania, also in view of the obligations that my country has taken and will undertake in the near future, within the European integration process.

In this context, Albania has entered last February into a letter of agreement with FAO, on behalf of the GFCM, signed by the Minister of Agriculture and the FAO Deputy Director General at the FAO HQ. This letter of agreement aimed at ensuring the provision of technical assistance by the GFCM Secretariat to Albania under different areas of cooperation in the context of the GFCM mid-term strategy;

The GFCM Secretariat carried out several field missions to Albania and in a very practical manner helped us significantly to assess our system and the problems we were experiencing. Thanks to this support, it has been possible for the Ministry to prepare a new bid on technical requirements for the update of the existing national VMS. This is a welcome development given the obligations we have under the sub-regional management plan for the Adriatic Sea adopted by the GFCM as well as EU Regulations.

It is important that obligations are harmonized with incentives, such as technical assistance to cooperating countries. This was recognized last March in Malta when the MedFish4Ever Declaration was adopted, including with the participation of Albania in this important event. I would like to recall in particular the provisions in this declaration that recognize the need for a technical assistance system and the support needed for developing countries in meeting their obligations on the conservation of fisheries and aquaculture.

Taking into consideration the fact, that my country has implemented all GFCM Recommendations as well as the most relevant EU Regulations for the management of shared stocks, I hope that Albania will get the necessary support to ensure its commitment to our region.

In this framework, I would like to emphasize the support we have received and continue to take from the regional project FAO-AdriaMed, which has contributed significantly to the cooperation between management structures, research institutions and stakeholders

I look forward to contributing to the discussions in this session and I thank you very much for your attention.

**Samir Majdalani**

**Head of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon**

Firstly, please give me the opportunity to address the hosting country and convey my gratitude to Montenegro for such an excellent organization of the annual session. Lebanon is very pleased to be again in Budva and we look forward to working with other fellow countries and colleagues from the participating organizations;

I would like to briefly inform the Commission, at the very opening, on the positive developments that have taken place since last year in relation to a sub-regional GFCM unit for the Eastern Mediterranean. You might recall that my country, at the 40th session of the GFCM, expressed its intent to host an office of the Secretariat in Beirut in the context of the sub-regional approach to fisheries being implemented by the Commission;

Significant efforts have been made internally during the inter-session by the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture, including in close coordination with the FAO Representation in Lebanon and the GFCM Secretariat. We have come to a common understanding in that when the FAO Sub-Regional Office in Lebanon will move to its new and bigger premises, most likely by the first half of 2018, we can devote some office space to the sub-regional GFCM unit for the Eastern Mediterranean. This solution would be the more straightforward, from an administrative point of view, both for Lebanon and for FAO/GFCM;

We hope that we will be able to inaugurate the sub-regional GFCM unit for Eastern Mediterranean next year, insha-Allah, and take advantage of this outpost to increase the focus in the work of the Commission on the Eastern Mediterranean region. Such a unit will surely contribute to foster enhanced cooperation not only at country level but also at organizational level.

**Hamdo Tinjak**  
**Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations,**  
**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Dear Executive Secretary, dear representatives of GFCM member countries, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here today on the 41 session of the GFCM Commission. This is the second commission that BiH participate to, after status of Cooperating non-contracting Party is granted to Bosnian and Herzegovinian last year.

Since the time we started our cooperation with GFCM we provided and exchanged statistical and other information and participated at the CoC meetings. Also our nominated contact points for cooperation on institutional matters and SAC and Aquaculture and Fisheries participated in different meetings and scientific bodies. Knowledge and experience exchanged with other colleagues is already used and have a positive effect to development of our fishery and aquaculture sector.

We are aware that this is just beginning and that we are still in the early stage when it comes to harmonisation of our legislation with GFCM measures and Common Fishery Policy of the EC. But there is commitment and strong interest in ensuring a prosperous future for fishery sector.

Cooperation with GFCM is also confirmed by BiH CoM (on the 22nd session held 9 September 2015), with conclusion that MoFTER – institution I represent today, in cooperation with the other competent authorities in the country should continue with the activities that will in due course lead BiH to full membership with the Commission.

Before we get membership status with GFCM we need to achieve certain level and bridge the existing gap, in particular, with EU countries and starting from the revision of our national legal framework. Cooperation with GFCM helps us to align with EU priorities and agenda too, but still there is a need for further technical assistance starting from the said revision of our national legislation and moving on to other important areas such as data collection in fisheries and the sustainable management of aquaculture. BiH has already filed an official request for technical assistance with the GFCM and we are now looking for the provision of such assistance to be initiated. We do hope this will be done very soon and we stand ready to welcome the GFCM to Sarajevo before the end of this year. Having in mind that BiH has potential candidate status with EC, and recently finalized EC questioner which includes fishery - chapter 13, further policy development in this filed is one of the priority for BiH.

Our country has been paying progressively more attention to the important of marine related issues, including the conservation of fisheries and ecosystems and is in the last stage of finalising procedure for signing MedFish4Ever declaration.

I wish to mention that we also started cooperation with the AdriaMed project and after signing project agreement we expect that project will become fully operational.

Looking forward to our future cooperation and I wish you successful meeting!

Thank you!

**Martine Garcia-Mascarenhas**

**Second Secretary at the Embassy of the Principality of Monaco in Italy and  
Deputy Alternate Permanent Representative of the Principality of Monaco to  
the FAO**

Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Secrétaire exécutif, Chers Collègues et Délégués,

Je souhaite remercier la CGPM et le Monténégro pour leur accueil dans ce magnifique lieu pour la 41ème session de la CGPM et rappeler deux éléments en lien avec le Programme de développement durable à l'horizon 2030, à l'occasion de la Journée mondiale de l'alimentation, célébrée aujourd'hui :

L'Appel à l'action adopté le 9 juin 2017, reconnaissant que l'océan est notre avenir, en lien avec la mise en œuvre de l'ODD n°14, la conservation et l'exploitation durable des océans et des mers ainsi que de leurs ressources indispensables à notre survie ;

La conclusion de l'allocution de SAS le Prince Albert II au débat général de la 72ème session de l'AGNU le 19 septembre dernier sur l'apport scientifique fondamental à ces questions : « Qu'elle nous rassure ou nous effraie la science doit nous inciter à l'action et donc avancer ensemble pour le progrès et l'espoir d'un monde meilleur ».

Je vous remercie.

**Sigrid Luber**  
**President, OceanCare**

Distinguished Chair and Delegates,

At the last GFCM conference OceanCare was honoured to sign an MoU with the GFCM which defined areas of cooperation, including addressing ocean noise pollution and its harmful impacts on marine life including fish.

It is with pleasure that I am announcing a capacity building workshop on mitigating the impact of underwater noise on marine biodiversity with specific focus on seismic surveys in the south-east Mediterranean, which will take place in Split, Croatia, on November 22 and 23. I would like to warmly invite GFCM Members to attend this workshop. If you are interested please do contact me so that I can share the program with you.

The detrimental effect of ocean noise on fish, and therefore fisheries, undermines global efforts to restore fish stocks and requires the increased involvement of specialist UN agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, including the GFCM whose area of application covers known underwater noise hotspots.

Recognising that the UN's Sustainable Fisheries Resolution has specifically encouraged further studies, including by the FAO, on the impacts of underwater noise on fish stocks and fishing catching rates, as well as associated socioeconomic effects, OceanCare has advocated at the United Nations that the FAO should be supported in initiating this work and we urge GFCM members to consider this matter in preparation of issues which can be raised at the next session of the FAO's Committee on Fisheries in July next year.

Having this in mind we would also like to inform you about the UNCLOS Informal Consultative Process meeting in May 2018 which will be dedicated to the ocean noise pollution issue. The UN Division on the Law of the Sea is calling for information on noise and marine life. OceanCare encourages GFCM Members to respond to this call and to submit information you might have especially also on areas where fishing activities are restricted, but other activities such as noise pollution may continue to affect fish stocks and negatively impact recovery rates.

Finally I would like to make you aware of a new scientific report which OceanCare has produced on this topic which provides a comprehensive review of all existing peer reviewed literature on the impacts of ocean noise on fish and invertebrates. I have copies of this report with me at this meeting and would be happy to share with interested GFCM members.

Thank you.

**Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/1 on the reporting of aquaculture data and information  
repealing Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/6**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

*RECALLING* that the objectives of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) include ensuring the sustainable development of aquaculture in the GFCM area of application;

*RECALLING* the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) which calls for sustainable aquaculture development and responsible aquaculture practices;

*RECALLING* the role of the GFCM in promoting the sustainable development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean, Black Sea and connecting waters;

*RECALLING* Rule XVII 1. b) of the GFCM Rules of Procedure whereby contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) have an obligation to provide information on production as well as other data relevant to the work of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ);

*CONSIDERING* the continuous development of the Information System for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM) over the past years;

*RECOGNIZING* the need for the CAQ to have reliable data available in order to carry out its work effectively;

*RECALLING* that standards in aquaculture data collection and statistics should be established in line with the guidelines set by the FAO Coordinating Working Party on Aquaculture Statistics (CWP-AS);

*NOTING* the proposal made at the sixth session of the CAQ (Albania, December 2008) to establish a regional data collection scheme for aquaculture;

*NOTING* that the thirty-first session of the GFCM (FAO headquarters, January 2007) recommended that the responsibilities of the SIPAM national coordinators be formally endowed with a national institution;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, the following recommendation:

1. CPCs shall submit the data for all the parameters listed below to the GFCM Secretariat, on an annual basis:

Production statistics

- CWP-AS<sup>1</sup> statistical areas
- Culture environment (brackish, marine and freshwater)
- Cultured species (scientific and common names; including capture-based species)
- System of culture (extensive, semi-intensive, intensive)
- Type of culture (cages, ponds, raceways, hatcheries, etc.)
- Type of product (ongrowing, eggs, fingerlings, etc.)
- Capture-based aquaculture input (seed quantity: eggs, wild fingerlings, wild fish, etc.)

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<sup>1</sup> See *The Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics: Its origin, role and structure*. FAO Fisheries Circular. No. 193. December 1995.

- Production quantity (tonnes/units)
- Production value (currency)

#### Production centres

- Units (segments) of production (hatcheries, ongrowing farms)
- Number of production centres per unit (segment)
- Cultured species per unit (segment)
- Total volume (m<sup>3</sup>) of facilities of production centres per segment
- Destination of production per segment (consumption, ongrowing, restocking, ornamental)

#### Market

- Trade and consumption
  - Imports and exports of aquatic products of animal origin (weight and value)
  - Imports and exports of species that are also produced with aquaculture (weight and value)
  - Top five import origins and export destinations of farmed species

2. The data shall be submitted by 31 December, the reference year for submitted data being the preceding year.
3. CPCs shall nominate a national focal point responsible for the submission of aquaculture data.

**Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/2  
on the management of blackspot seabream fisheries in the Alboran Sea (geographical subareas  
1 to 3) for a two-year transition period**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

*CONSIDERING* that the objective of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of marine living resources in the GFCM area of application;

*RECALLING* that in giving effect to the objective of the GFCM Agreement, the GFCM shall adopt recommendations on conservation and management measures aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of fishing activities, in order to preserve marine living resources and the economic and social viability of fisheries and that, in adopting such recommendations, the GFCM shall give particular attention to measures to prevent overfishing and minimize discards as well as to the potential impacts on small-scale fisheries and local communities;

*RECALLING* that, in giving effect to the objective of the GFCM Agreement, the GFCM shall foster, as appropriate, a subregional approach to fisheries management and aquaculture development in order to better address the specificities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;

*CONSIDERING* that the GFCM shall adopt management measures based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries to guarantee the maintenance of stocks above levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield;

*RECALLING* that the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration requires that, in the context of establishing an ecosystem-based fisheries management framework, all key fisheries should be managed with management plans;

*CONSIDERING* that the GFCM shall apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks of 4 August 1995 and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

*CONSIDERING* that the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries provides that States “should apply the precautionary approach widely to conservation, management and exploitation of living aquatic resources in order to protect them and preserve the aquatic environment, taking account of the best scientific evidence available. The absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take measures to conserve target species, associated or dependent species and non-target species and their environment”;

*CONSIDERING* that the scientific evaluation and/or management of blackspot seabream is under the responsibility of the GFCM, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF);

*CONSIDERING* that the latest assessment, carried out at the fifteenth session of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC), indicated that blackspot seabream is in overfishing and overexploited in the Alboran Sea;

*CONSIDERING* that all measures formulated by the GFCM shall be based on the best scientific advice available, taking into account relevant environmental, economic and social factors;

*NOTING* that as the scientific data available to assess the stock of blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea remain insufficient, the management of blackspot seabream, covered in this recommendation for a two-year transitional period, is based on the precautionary approach in the absence of a solid scientific advice;

*NOTING* that, based on the scientific advice of the SAC, the GFCM should adopt a management plan for this species at its forty-third session;

*CONSIDERING* the significant socio-economic importance of fisheries, especially local fisheries, exploiting blackspot seabream and the need to ensure their sustainability;

*CONSIDERING* that blackspot seabream is also targeted by recreational fisheries;

*CONSIDERING* that important fisheries targeting blackspot seabream exploit in particular a stock distributed across the Strait of Gibraltar, including the Alboran Sea and adjacent waters of the Atlantic ocean (i.e. ICES division IXa and FAO area 34 1.11);

*NOTING* that blackspot seabream is included in the GFCM list of priority species for the western Mediterranean;

*NOTING* that there is a high level of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) catches all over the Mediterranean, including blackspot seabream, and that a more adequate monitoring of the fishing fleets involved in such activities, including recreational fisheries, is needed;

*NOTING* that the SAC agreed on the need, as highlighted by the Subregional Committee for the Western Mediterranean (SRC-WM), for the provision of advice for the potential establishment of management measures for the blackspot seabream fishery in the Alboran Sea, including, *inter alia*, improving socio-economic monitoring and standardization of fishing effort;

*CONSIDERING* Resolution GFCM/40/2016/2 for a mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, in particular targets 1, 2 and 3 therein;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, the following recommendation:

## **PART I**

### **General objective, scope and definitions**

#### ***General objective and scope***

1. The measures set forth in this recommendation aim at improving the exploitation pattern of blackspot seabream fisheries as well as the scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge of those fisheries in the Mediterranean.
2. This recommendation shall apply to the Alboran Sea (geographical subregions [GSAs] 1, 2 and 3) for a transitional period of two years.
3. This recommendation shall apply to all commercial and recreational fishing vessels fishing blackspot seabream.

## **Definitions**

4. For the purpose of this recommendation, the following definitions shall apply:
  - a) “blackspot seabream” means fish pertaining to the species *Pagellus bogaraveo*;
  - b) “targeted fishing for blackspot seabream” means fishing activities having on board or landing quantities of blackspot seabream that constitutes more than 20 percent of the catch in live weight after sorting per tide;
  - c) “recreational fishing” means a non-commercial fishing activity exploiting marine living resources for recreation, tourism or sport; and
  - d) “authorized vessel” means a fishing vessel with a fishing authorization entitling it to carry out specific fishing activities during a specific period, in a given area or for a given fishery under specific conditions.

## **PART II**

### **Specific objectives and transitional measures**

5. The operational objective of this recommendation shall be to maintain fishing mortality for blackspot seabream within precautionary reference points and to achieve as soon as possible or maintain the maximum sustainable yield.
6. Based on the SAC advice, the GFCM shall establish the specific objectives of the management plan, at the latest at its forty-third session.
7. The objective of the transitional measures for blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea for a period of two years is to start preparing the ground for a future management plan, which will only be established after the SAC provides an updated validated assessment of the status of the stock, while reducing the risk that, in the absence of relevant scientific assessment, the biomass level of the stock could drop below undesirable values, which would entail also negative consequences on the economic viability of the fisheries concerned.
8. Pending scientific advice, in 2018 or at the latest in 2020, and following the precautionary approach to fisheries management, the contracting parties or cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) concerned shall maintain the fishing fleet capacity or fishing effort at levels authorized and applied in recent years for the exploitation of blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea.
9. Taking into account the scientific advice, CPCs may designate spatio-temporal restrictions, if they do not exist under national legislation in view of banning or restricting fishing activities to protect juvenile and/or spawner aggregation areas of blackspot seabream. CPCs shall notify to the GFCM, by 31 January 2019, the areas and the restrictions applied. Passive fishing gear, including markers and intermediary buoys, shall permanently display the registration letters and numbers reported on the hull of the fishing vessel to which they belong.
10. Without prejudice to the provisions foreseen under paragraph 1 and in line with paragraph 2 of Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM logbook, amending Recommendation GFCM/34/2010/1, CPCs shall establish a mechanism to ensure that all daily catches and bycatch of blackspot seabream, irrespective of the live weight of the catch, are declared. As for recreational fisheries, CPCs shall endeavour to record or estimate the catches of this species.

**PART III**  
**Management and monitoring of the fishing capacity and fishing effort**

11. CPCs shall establish a register of the fishing vessels authorized to carry out targeted fishing for blackspot seabream. Fishing vessels targeting blackspot seabream shall be allowed to carry out specific fishing activities only if these are indicated in a valid fishing authorization issued by the competent authorities and specifying the technical conditions under which such activities shall be carried out, as defined in the annex to this recommendation.

12. CPCs shall maintain and update the above mentioned register of fishing authorizations. Unless specifically provided for within the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF), CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat:

- The list of operating vessels for which such authorization has been delivered for the current or the following year(s), not later than 28/29 February of each year;
- A report on fishing activities carried out by the vessels referred to in paragraph 8, in an aggregated format, including the following minimum information: number of exploitation days, exploitation and catch area of blackspot seabream, not later than 30 November every year, as from 30 November 2018 or at the latest from 30 November 2020.

13. In order to facilitate the exchange of information regarding inspections to be done, the list of authorized vessels shall be made available to the CPCs concerned, which may also communicate with each other their information on the fishing vessels authorized to carry out blackspot seabream fishing activities.

14. All vessels above 12 metres length overall authorized to fish for blackspot seabream shall be equipped with vessel monitoring system (VMS) or any other geolocalization system allowing control authorities to track their activities.

**PART IV**  
**Scientific monitoring**

15. CPCs whose fishing fleets target blackspot seabream and are authorized to do so shall ensure that a mechanism for adequate monitoring of fisheries and catches is duly in place with a view to allowing the SAC to provide descriptive information and advice on at least the following:

- a) characteristics of fishing gear, *inter alia*, the maximum length of longlines and fixed nets and the number, type and size of hooks;
- b) deployed nominal fishing effort (e.g. number of fishing days/week times the relevant unit of activity, e.g. hooks) and overall catch levels by commercial fishing fleets. An estimate of recreational fisheries catches should also be provided;
- c) conservation and management reference points with a view to establishing multiannual management plans for sustainable fisheries in line with the objective of maximum sustainable yield and low risk of stock collapse;
- d) socio-economic effects of alternative management scenarios, including input/output and/or technical measures, as identified by the GFCM and/or CPCs;
- e) possible spatio-temporal closures aimed at preserving the sustainability of fisheries; and
- f) potential impacts of recreational fisheries on the status of blackspot seabream stock(s);

16. The SAC shall provide, to the maximum extent possible, an updated status of the different blackspot seabream fisheries and stocks in the Mediterranean, by 2020.

17. Without prejudice to paragraph 13, the SAC, taking into account the recommendations of the SRC-WM, shall provide, in 2019 at the latest, an update of the status of blackspot seabream stocks distributed in the Alboran Sea and in the adjacent waters of the Atlantic Ocean. For this purpose, the SAC shall attempt to deliver a joint assessment with ICES and the CECAF Scientific Subcommittee.

18. In the event that an evaluation, as described in paragraph 15, would not be possible, the SAC shall provide an update of the status of blackspot seabream stocks distributed in the Alboran Sea.

**PART V**  
**Final provisions**

19. Data submissions referred to in Parts III and IV shall be done in accordance with appropriate data submission standards, procedures and protocols to be made available online by the GFCM Secretariat, in line with existing recommendations and the technical manual of the DCRF.

20. This recommendation, given its transitional nature, shall remain in force until the adoption by the GFCM, at its forty-third session, of a management plan for blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea.

## **Annex**

Subject to more detailed provisions under the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework, the list referred to in paragraph 12 shall contain, for each vessel, the following information:

- Vessel name
- Vessel register number (code assigned by CPCs)
- GFCM registration number (country ISO 3-alpha code + 9 digits, e.g. xxx000000001)
- Port of registration (full name of the port)
- Previous name (if any)
- Previous flag (if any)
- Previous details of deletion from other registers (if any)
- International radio call sign (if any)
- VMS (indicate Y/N)
- Type of vessel, length overall (LOA) and gross tonnage (GT) and engine power expressed in kW
- Name and address of owner(s) and operator(s)
- Main gear(s) used to fish for blackspot seabream and fleet segment allocation
- Seasonal period authorized for fishing blackspot seabream

**Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/3**  
**on the establishment of a fisheries restricted area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit in the Adriatic Sea**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

*RECALLING* that the objective of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of marine living resources in the GFCM area of application;

*CONSIDERING* that all measures formulated by the GFCM shall be based on the best scientific advice available, taking into account relevant environmental, economic and social factors;

*CONSIDERING* that the GFCM shall apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks of 4 August 1995 and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

*CONSIDERING* that the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries provides that States “should apply the precautionary approach widely to conservation, management and exploitation of living aquatic resources in order to protect them and preserve the aquatic environment, taking account of the best scientific evidence available” and that the absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures;

*HAVING REGARD* to Article 8 b) ii) of the GFCM Agreement “to minimize impacts of fishing activities on marine living resources and their ecosystems”;

*HAVING REGARD* to Article 8 b) iv) of the GFCM Agreement “to establish fisheries restricted areas (FRAs) for the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), including but not limited to nursery and spawning areas [...]”;

*RECALLING* Resolution GFCM/40/2016/2 for a mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, particularly Target 4, Output 4.2 a) on “the promotion of the identification and establishment of new FRAs to protect priority areas within ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), VMEs, etc. from harmful fishing activities, and the implementation of monitoring and control systems to ensure the efficiency of these spatial measures, also in relation to Target 3”;

*RECALLING* the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration, in particular its paragraph 38;

*CONSIDERING* that the Jabuka/Pomo Pit is identified as an EBSA under the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity;

*NOTING* the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.5 that specifically calls for conserving at least 10 percent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law;

*TAKING INTO ACCOUNT* the advice of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC), as expressed at its nineteenth session (Slovenia, May 2017), on the establishment of a FRA in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, the following recommendation:

**PART I**  
**Subject matter, scope and definitions**

*Subject matter and scope*

1. This recommendation shall establish a FRA in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area in the Adriatic Sea, with a view to contributing to the protection of VMEs and important essential fish habitats for demersal stocks such as European hake and Norway lobster.
2. For the purpose of this recommendation, the FRA established in paragraph 1 shall be divided in zone A, zone B and zone C and bounded by the lines joining the geographic coordinates defined in Annex 1.

*Definitions*

3. For the purpose of this recommendation, the following definitions shall apply:
  - a) “fisheries restricted area” (FRA) means a geographically-defined area in which some specific fishing activities are temporarily banned or restricted in order to improve the exploitation and conservation of demersal stocks;
  - b) “Recreational fishing” means non-commercial fishing activities exploiting marine living resources, including leisure, sport, underwater and charter fisheries;
  - c) “Designated landing point” means ports, or places close to the shore, designated by the contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) according to Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/1 on a regional scheme on port state measures to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application, including offshore terminals and other installations for landing, transshipping, packaging, processing, refuelling or resupplying of fishing vessels, where landings, transshipments, packaging and/or processing operations of fishery products are permitted;
  - d) “Fishing authorization” means entitlement other than fishing licence and issued by CPCs to engage in fishing activities with specific fishing gear, during a specified period and in a given area or for a given fishery under specific conditions;
  - e) “Authorized vessel” means fishing vessel in possession of a specific fishing authorization; and
  - f) “Fishing day” means any continuous period of 24 hours, or part thereof, during which a vessel is searching for fish, shooting, setting, towing, hauling a fishing gear, taking catch on board, transshipping, retaining on board, processing on board, transferring and landing fish and fishery products.

**PART II**  
**Management and monitoring of fishing capacity  
and fishing effort in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA**

*Zone A*

4. Any professional fishing activity with bottom-set nets, bottom trawls, set longlines and traps shall be prohibited in zone A.

5. Any recreational fishing activity shall be prohibited in zone A.

### **Zone B**

6. Fishing activities with bottom-set nets, bottom trawls, set longlines and traps shall be prohibited in zone B, from 1 September to 31 October each year and starting from 2017.

7. Without prejudice to paragraph 6, professional activities with bottom-set nets, bottom trawls, set longlines and traps may be allowed in zone B, provided that the vessel and/or its master is in possession of a specific authorization and that historical fishing activities in zone B are demonstrated. CPCs shall establish a register of the fishing vessels authorized to fish in this zone.

8. Authorized fishing vessels shall not be entitled to fish for more than two fishing days per week.

9. Authorized fishing vessels using otter twin trawl gear shall not be entitled to fish for more than one fishing day per week.

### **Zone C**

10. Fishing activities with bottom-set nets, bottom trawls, set longlines and traps and recreational fisheries shall be prohibited in zone C, from 1 September to 31 October each year and starting from 2017.

11. Without prejudice to paragraph 10, professional activities with bottom-set nets, bottom trawls, set longlines and traps may be allowed in zone C, provided that the vessel or its master is in possession of a specific authorization and that historical fishing activities in zone C are demonstrated. CPCs shall establish a register of the fishing vessels authorized to fish in this zone.

12. Authorized vessels fishing with bottom trawls shall be entitled to fish on Saturdays and Sundays only, from 05.00 hours till 22.00 hours.

13. Authorized vessels fishing with bottom-set nets, set longlines and traps shall be allowed to fish from Monday 05.00 hours till Thursday 22.00 hours.

## **PART III Control measures**

14. CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 30 April 2018, the list of authorized vessels for 2018 and subsequently, not later than 30 April each year, the list of authorized vessels for the forthcoming year. For each vessel, the list shall contain the information detailed in Annex 2.

15. Authorized fishing vessels shall only land catches of demersal stocks in CPCs designated landing points. To this end, each CPC shall designate landing points in which landings of demersal stocks from the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA is authorized. The list of such landing points shall be communicated to the GFCM Secretariat by 30 April each year.

16. Fishing vessels authorized to fish in zone B and/or zone C shall be equipped with vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and/or automated identification systems (AIS) in correct working order, and fishing gear on board or in use shall be duly identified, numbered and marked before starting any fishing operation or navigation in the FRA.

17. Fishing vessels equipped with bottom-set nets, bottom trawls, set longlines and traps without authorization shall be allowed to transit through the FRA, only if they follow a direct course at a constant speed of not less than 7 knots and are equipped with VMS and/or AIS active on board.

**PART IV**  
**Final provisions**

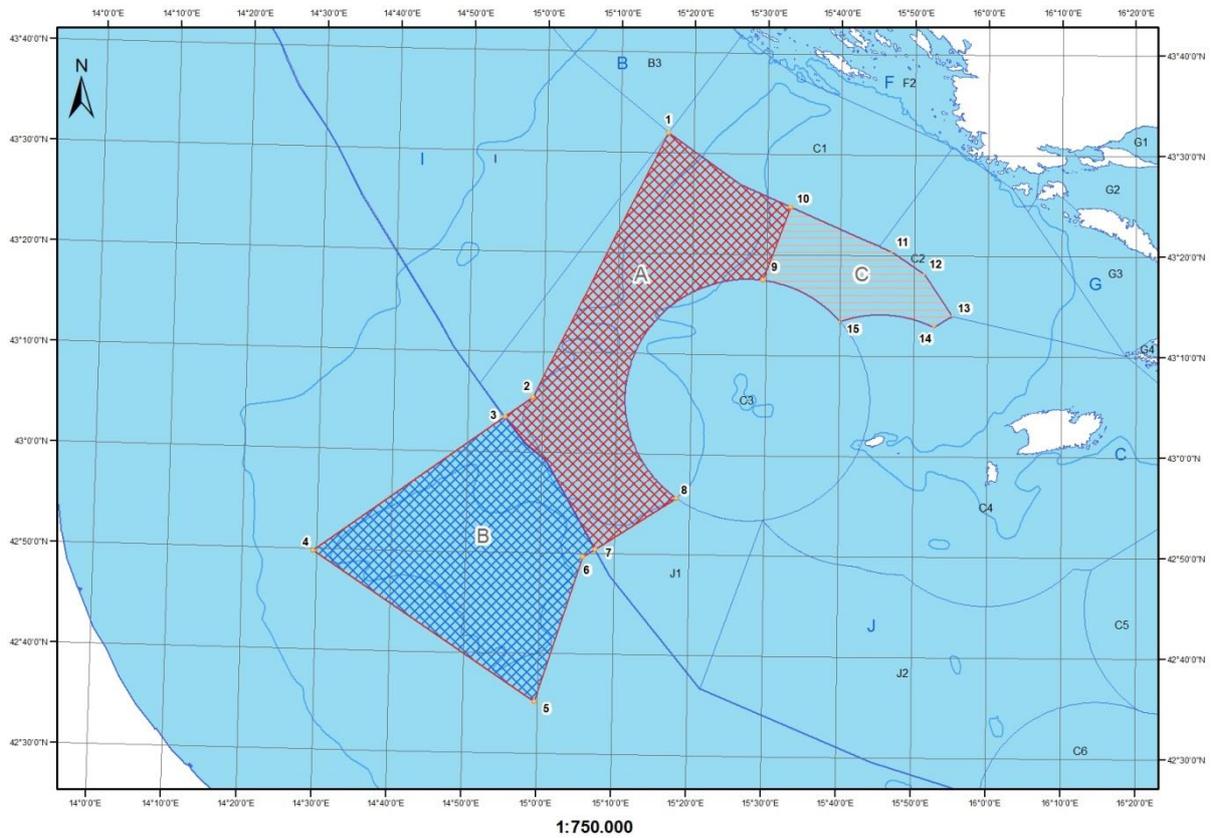
18. CPCs shall call the attention of the relevant national and international authorities in order to protect the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA from the impact of any activity that may jeopardize the conservation of the characteristic features of these particular habitats.

19. This recommendation shall be without prejudice to the adoption of stricter measures by the CPCs for the vessels flying their flag.

20. This recommendation applies until 31 December 2020. The SAC and the Compliance Committee (CoC) shall review its implementation on a yearly basis in order to issue recommendations where appropriate. Based on SAC advice, the management measures for the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA shall be reviewed in 2020.

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**Geographical coordinates of the  
Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA (Adriatic Sea)**



<b>ZONE A</b>		
<b>Point</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>
1	43°32,044' N	15°16,501' E
2	43°05,452' N	14°58,658' E
3	43°03,477' N	14°54,982' E
7	42°50,450' N	15°07,431' E
8	42°55,618' N	15°18,194' E
9	43°17,436' N	15°29,496' E
10	43°24,758' N	15°33,215' E

<b>ZONE B</b>		
<b>Point</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>
3	43°03,477' N	14°54,982' E
4	42°49,811' N	14°29,550' E
5	42°35,205' N	14°59,611' E
6	42°49,668' N	15°05,802' E
7	42°50,450' N	15°07,431' E

<b>ZONE C</b>		
<b>Point</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>
9	43°17,436' N	15°29,496' E
10	43°24,758' N	15°33,215' E
11	43°20,345' N	15°47,012' E
12	43°18,150' N	15°51,362' E
13	43°13,984' N	15°55,232' E
14	43°12,873' N	15°52,761' E
15	43°13,494' N	15°40,040' E

The list referred to in paragraph 14 shall contain for each vessel the following information:

- Vessel name
- Vessel register number
- GFCM registration number (country ISO 3-alpha code + 9 digits, e.g. xxx000000001)
- Previous name (if any)
- Previous flag (if any)
- Previous details of deletion from other registers (if any)
- International radio call sign (if any)
- Type of vessel, length overall (LOA) and gross tonnage (GT)
- Name and address of owner(s) and operator(s)
- Main gear used to fish in the FRA
- Seasonal period authorized for fishing in the FRA
- Number of fishing days that can be exerted by each vessel
- Designated port

**Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4  
on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea  
29)**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

*CONSIDERING* that the objective of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of marine living resources in the GFCM area of application;

*RECALLING* that, in giving effect to the objective of the GFCM Agreement, the GFCM shall adopt recommendations on conservation and management measures aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of fishing activities, in order to preserve marine living resources and the economic and social viability of fisheries and that, in adopting such recommendations, the GFCM shall give particular attention to measures to prevent overfishing and minimize discards as well as to the potential impacts on small-scale fisheries and local communities;

*RECALLING* that in giving effect to the objective of the GFCM Agreement, the GFCM shall foster, as appropriate, a subregional approach to fisheries management and aquaculture development in order to better address the specificities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;

*CONSIDERING* that the GFCM shall adopt management measures based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries to guarantee the maintenance of stocks above levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY);

*CONSIDERING* that all measures formulated by the GFCM shall be based on the best scientific advice available, taking into account relevant environmental, economic and social factors;

*CONSIDERING* that the GFCM shall apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

*RECALLING* that the Bucharest Declaration towards enhanced cooperation on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture calls upon Black Sea riparian countries to enhance multilateral cooperation and implement actions to improve the sustainability of resources, particularly with regard to scientific advice, sustainable small-scale fisheries, monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), capacity-building, as well as actions emanating from a regional plan of action to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing;

*RECALLING* Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/2 on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom-set gillnet fisheries for turbot and conservation of cetaceans in the Black Sea;

*RECALLING* Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/3 on the establishment of a set of measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in turbot fisheries in the Black Sea;

*RECALLING* Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7 on a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application;

*RECALLING* Decision GFCM/37/2013/2 on a roadmap to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the Black Sea;

*RECALLING* Decision GFCM/36/2012/1 on guidelines on a general management framework and presentation of scientific information for multiannual management plans for sustainable fisheries in the GFCM area of application;

*NOTING* that, for turbot in geographical subarea (GSA) 29, the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS) concluded, at its fifth session (Romania, June 2016) that the stock is overexploited and in overexploitation with some signs of recovery in the European Union (EU) waters and advised to implement a recovery plan;

*CONSIDERING* that fishing mortality should be kept below safe thresholds to ensure long-term high yields while limiting the risk of stock collapse and guaranteeing stable and more viable fisheries;

*NOTING* that, for turbot and associated species in GSA 29, the WGBS underlined in 2017 that there is a high level of IUU catches;

*CONSIDERING* the socio-economic importance of fisheries exploiting turbot and the need to ensure their sustainability;

*CONSIDERING* that certain fisheries management measures need to be revised and adapted to the evolution of both the status of exploited stocks and scientific knowledge, and that an appropriate method to this end shall be established;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 b), 8 b), and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, the following recommendation:

## **PART I**

### **General objectives, scope and definitions**

#### ***General objectives of the multiannual plan and transitional measures***

1. A multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in GSA 29 shall be developed, consistent with the precautionary approach. This plan shall be designed to produce high long-term yields consistent with the MSY and to guarantee a low risk of stock collapse while maintaining sustainable and relatively stable fisheries.
2. Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) whose vessels have been actively fishing turbot in GSA 29 agree to implement such a multiannual management plan for the fisheries concerned, in accordance with the general and specific objectives and measures set by this recommendation.
3. A set of transitional precautionary management measures for the Black Sea shall be developed in order to ensure that pending scientific advice by the WGBS, the stocks and fisheries are kept at biologically sustainable levels.
4. The multiannual management plan for fisheries exploiting turbot shall also pursue the reduction of IUU fishing activities in GSA 29.
5. CPCs whose vessels have been actively fishing for turbot in GSA 29 agree to implement actions established under Decision GFCM/37/2013/2 on a roadmap to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the Black Sea.

#### ***Geographical scope***

6. The multiannual management plan established by this recommendation shall apply in GSA 29 (Black Sea).

## **Definitions**

7. For the purpose of this recommendation, the following definitions shall apply:
- a) “Black Sea” means GSA 29 as defined in Resolution GFCM/33/2009/2 on the establishment of geographical subareas in the GFCM area of application, amending Resolution GFCM/31/2007/2;
  - b) “vessel actively fishing for turbot” means any vessel equipped with bottom-set gillnets and in possession of a valid fishing authorization for turbot;
  - c) “fishing day” means any continuous period of 24 hours, or part thereof, during which a vessel is present in GSA 29 and is searching for fish, shooting, setting, towing, hauling a fishing gear, taking catch on board, transshipping, retaining on board, processing on board, transferring and landing fish and fishery products;
  - d) “turbot” means fish pertaining to the species *Psetta maxima*;
  - e) “illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing” or “IUU fishing” means the activities mentioned in paragraph 3 of the 2001 FAO International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing;
  - f) “designated landing point” means ports, or places close to the shore, designated by the CPCs in accordance with recommendations GFCM/40/2016//1 on a regional scheme on port state measures to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities in the GFCM area of application and GFCM/39/2015/3 on the establishment of a set of measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in turbot fisheries in the Black Sea, including offshore terminals and other installations for landing, transshipping, packaging, processing, refuelling or resupplying of fishing vessels, where landings, transshipments, packaging and/or processing operations of fishery products are permitted;
  - g) “authorized vessel” means any fishing vessel in possession of a fishing authorization entitling it to carry out specific fishing activities during a specific period, in a given area or for a given fishery under specific conditions;
  - h) “bottom-set gillnet” means any net made up of a single piece of net held vertically in the water by floats and weights fixed or capable of being fixed by any means to the bottom of the sea and maintaining the gear in place either close to the bottom or floating in the water column; and
  - i) “fishing authorization” means special fishing authorization entitling a vessel to engage in fishing activities for turbot during a specified period in the given area.

## **PART II**

### **Specific objectives of the multiannual management plan and transitional measures in GSA 29**

8. The operational objective of the multiannual management plan shall be to maintain fishing mortality for turbot within agreed precautionary reference points, with a view to achieving or maintaining fishing mortality at MSY level, in accordance with the objectives described in Part I of this recommendation.

9. Based on the advice of the WGBS, the Commission shall establish the specific objectives of the multiannual management plan, at the latest at its forty-third session.

10. The objective of the transitional measures for turbot in GSA 29 is to start preparing the ground for a future management plan while reducing the risk that, in the absence of relevant scientific assessment, the biomass level of the stock could drop below biologically sustainable level values with negative consequences also on the economic viability of the fisheries concerned.

11. Pending the identification of target reference points in line with the MSY, the general objectives of the multiannual management plan set out in paragraph 1 shall be attained while maintaining the fishing fleet capacity or fishing effort at the levels authorized and applied in recent years for the exploitation of turbot in GSA 29.

12. For the years 2018–2019, a total allowable catch (TAC) shall be set to 644 tonnes with the following temporary allocation:

Countries	EU	Turkey	Georgia	Ukraine	Russia
Quotas (tonnes)	114	374	5	101	50

13. This shall be without prejudice to the discussions to take place in the context of the working group referred to under paragraph 15 of this recommendation.

14. In case the WGBS advice provided for 2018 does not confirm a continuation of the constructive evolution of fishing mortality towards the restoration of the size of the Black Sea turbot stock, the TAC and quotas referred in paragraph 12 may be revisited by the GFCM.

15. A working group shall be established by the GFCM in 2019, within thirty calendar days following the 2019 WGBS session, in order to:

- a) establish a fair and equitable allocation scheme of the TAC of Black Sea turbot, taking into consideration the efforts made by CPCs to manage turbot fisheries and the amount of historical catches, and apply in some cases stricter rules than those defined in this recommendation, also based on socio-economic considerations; and
- b) establish the mechanism to manage the TAC, including a reduction mechanism of the TAC, if appropriate.

16. The approach specified under paragraph 12 shall continue to apply until a mutually agreed TAC allocation is adopted through a supplementary recommendation.

17. The WGBS shall, upon the availability of updated data, regularly assess the state of the turbot stock and, in particular, establish the level of current fishing mortality and provide the GFCM with the necessary elements for setting target reference points.

18. The GFCM, on the basis of the WGBS advice, shall review annually the target fishing mortality ( $F_{\text{target}}$ ).

19. Each CPC shall establish, each year, a closure period of at least two months during the spawning season of turbot (i.e. from April to June).

20. Operational objectives in terms of fighting against IUU fishing activities which are relevant for the turbot fisheries shall be developed as defined in part VII of this recommendation.

### **PART III**

#### **Scientific monitoring, adaptation and revision of the multiannual management plan**

21. CPCs shall ensure annually an adequate scientific monitoring of the status of turbot and associated species in GSA 29.
22. The WGBS shall provide, on an annual basis as from 2018, advice on the status of the stock of turbot in GSA 29, including specific objectives to maintain fishing mortality within agreed precautionary fishing mortality reference points and to restore the size of the Black Sea turbot stock at levels which can produce MSY in accordance with the objectives set out in paragraph 1.
23. The WGBS shall assess the biological, economic and social implications of implementing several management scenarios with the objective of restoring and maintaining the turbot population above levels which can produce the MSY.
24. Based on the WGBS advice, the GFCM may review the content of the multiannual management plan.
25. Whenever the GFCM, on the basis of advice from the WGBS, finds that the fishing mortality level to be specified as per paragraph 9 is no longer appropriate to achieve the objectives specified in paragraph 1, it shall revise those parameters accordingly. Whenever WGBS advice indicates that the general or specific objectives of the multiannual management plan are not being met, the GFCM shall decide additional and/or alternative management measures to contribute to achieving those objectives.
26. Where by any reason (e.g. lack of appropriate data), the WGBS is not in a position to provide an accurate advice on the status of the turbot and its exploitation level, the GFCM shall decide on the most appropriate management measures to ensure the sustainability of the fisheries. These measures shall be based on WGBS advice in accordance with the precautionary approach and take into consideration environmental and socio-economic elements in a way that guarantees the sustainability of the fisheries.
27. In 2018, the WGBS shall evaluate the effectiveness of the measures already applied at the national level and advise on whether these measures could be applicable to the entire GSA 29.
28. For the purpose of providing advice for the development of the multiannual management plan, the WGBS shall organize adequate workshops. For this purpose, the WGBS shall promote scientific cooperation and a harmonized approach among all Black Sea riparian countries.

### **PART IV**

#### **Fleet management measures**

29. Vessels authorized to fish turbot in GSA 29 shall be indicated in a special valid fishing authorization for turbot established by the CPCs, which shall specify the technical conditions under which fishing for turbot can be carried out. In the absence of such authorization a vessel shall not catch, retain on board, tranship, land, store or sell turbot.
30. CPCs shall maintain an updated register of those fishing authorizations. CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 31 January of each year, the list of active vessels for which such a fishing authorization has been issued for the current year or forthcoming years. This list shall include, for each vessel, the information referred to in Annex 1 of Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/3.
31. Authorized vessels shall comply with the obligations established in Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/2 and provide a detailed report of their fishing activities to national authorities,

including as minimum requirements the operating days, the operating area and the total catch of turbot. This information shall be provided to the GFCM Secretariat at least quarterly.

32. CPCs may designate additional spatial/temporal restrictions, with respect to those already established, in which fishing activities may be banned or restricted in order to protect aggregation areas of juveniles of turbot. Where applicable, CPCs shall notify to the GFCM Secretariat, by 1 January 2018, the list of these areas and the restrictions applied.

33. In addition to the provisions defined for bottom-set gillnets in Recommendations GFCM/37/2013/2 and GFCM/39/2015/3, CPCs shall cooperate to harmonize their legislation regarding the maximum length and height of gillnets in order to achieve common standards as from 2018.

## **PART V**

### **Management of fishing effort**

34. CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 31 January 2019, the list of all vessels authorized to fish for turbot.

35. Such list shall contain, for each vessel, the information referred to in Annex 1 of Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/3.

36. Any fishing vessel not included in the list established under paragraph 34 shall not be allowed to fish for, retain on board or land turbot if the vessel is engaged on a fishing trip in GSA 29.

37. CPCs shall promptly notify the GFCM Secretariat of any addition to, deletion from and/or any modification of the fishing fleets for turbot, as identified under paragraph 29, at any time such changes may occur.

38. The GFCM Secretariat shall maintain and update the list of fishing vessels authorized to fish for turbot and publish it on the GFCM website in a manner consistent with GFCM data confidentiality policy and procedures.

39. Vessels authorized to fish for turbot in GSA 29, irrespective of the vessel length overall (LOA), shall not exceed 180 fishing days per year.

40. Each CPC shall ensure to set up adequate mechanisms for the recording of each fishing vessel in a national fleet register, for the recording of vessels' catches and fishing effort via both the logbook and remote sensing as well as for the monitoring of fishing vessels activities and landings via catch and effort sampling surveys, according to the rules stipulated by each CPC.

41. The above provisions are without prejudice to Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7 concerning minimum standards for the establishment of a vessel monitoring system in the GFCM area of application.

## **PART VI**

### **Specific measures to address IUU fishing activities**

42. CPCs shall ensure that turbot in Black Sea waters is only fished using bottom-set gillnets. It shall be prohibited to carry out fishing activities with passive gear which are not identifiable in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/3, Part III. For that purpose, passive gear, including its markers and intermediary buoys, shall permanently display the external registration letters and numbers displayed on the hull of the fishing vessel to which it belongs.

43. CPCs shall establish a mechanism to ensure that vessels fishing in GSA 29 declare all catches and bycatch of turbot. The obligation to declare catches shall apply irrespective of the volume of the catch and the gear used.
44. Each CPC shall designate landing points in which landings of turbot in GSA 29 shall take place.
45. For each designated port, the port CPC shall specify permitted landing and transshipping times and places. The port CPC shall also ensure inspection coverage during all landing and transshipping times and at all landing and transshipping places.
46. It shall be prohibited to land or tranship from fishing vessels any quantity of turbot fished in GSA 29 at any place other than landing points designated by CPCs, in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/3, Part III.
47. CPCs shall transmit to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 30 November each year, any changes to the list of the designated landing points in which landings of turbot in GSA 29 may take place.
48. CPCs shall engage to cooperate in the fight against IUU fishing, in particular through sharing information and gathering intelligence to fight against illegal activities.
49. Part VI is without prejudice to Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/3.

## **PART VII**

### **MCS programme**

50. All vessels above 12 metres LOA authorized to fish for turbot shall be equipped with vessel monitoring system (VMS) or any other system of geolocalization allowing control authorities to track their activities.
51. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM logbook, all turbot catches shall be indicated in the logbook irrespectively of the live weight of the catch.
52. Upon request of CPCs, with the assistance of the GFCM secretariat and the European Fishery Control Agency (EFCA), a pilot project shall be established in 2018 with a view to establishing a voluntary observation and inspection programme, in order to ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures in this recommendation.
53. Such observation and inspection programme shall be based on the results of the pilot project and adopted before the end of 2019. It shall comprise, *inter alia*, the following elements:
- a) inspections at sea;
  - b) procedures for an effective investigation of an alleged violation of the conservation and management measures in this recommendation, and for reporting to the GFCM on the actions taken, including procedures for exchanging information;
  - c) provisions for appropriate action to be taken when inspections reveal serious violations as well as the expedient and transparent follow-up of such actions in order to uphold the flag State's responsibility within the intended programme;
  - d) port inspections;
  - e) monitoring of landings and catches, including statistical follow-up for management

purposes;

- f) specific monitoring programmes, including boarding and inspection; and
- g) observer programmes.

54. A working group shall be established to develop integrated MCS measures, in accordance with this recommendation. The tasks of this working group are defined in annex to this recommendation.

### **PART VIII** **Final provisions**

55. This recommendation repeals Recommendation 40/2016/6 on the scientific monitoring, management and control of turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29).

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**Terms of reference for the Working Group on integrated MCS measures for demersal fisheries targeting turbot in the Black Sea**

The working group referred to in paragraph 54, shall:

- 1) be supported by the GFCM;
- 2) establish a time schedule for the development of its work, and hold at least one meeting during 2018, before the next meeting of the Compliance Committee (CoC);
- 3) invite observers attending GFCM meetings, the FAO, and other regional fisheries management organizations to participate in its meetings; and
- 4) report its conclusions and opinions to the CoC.

The mandate of the working group covers the elements as described in Part VII of this recommendation.

**Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/5**  
**on the establishment of a regional adaptive management plan for the exploitation of red coral in the Mediterranean Sea**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

*RECALLING* that the objective of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of marine living resources in the GFCM area of application;

*CONSIDERING* that all measures formulated by the GFCM shall be based on the best scientific advice available, taking into account relevant environmental, economic and social factors;

*CONSIDERING* that the GFCM shall apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks of 4 August 1995 and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

*CONSIDERING* that the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries provides that states “should apply the precautionary approach widely to conservation, management and exploitation of living aquatic resources in order to protect them and preserve the aquatic environment, taking account of the best scientific evidence available. The absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take measures to conserve target species, associated or dependent species and non-target species and their environment”;

*RECALLING* that red coral is listed in Annex III of the Protocol concerning the Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol) of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) which implies that its exploitation needs to be properly regulated at national and international levels (consistent with the high conservation standards laid down in those acts);

*CONSIDERING* the international nature of red coral trade *versus* the socio-economic importance of local fisheries exploiting red coral and the need to ensure their sustainability;

*RECALLING* Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/2 on the exploitation of red coral in the GFCM area of application, in particular paragraph 10 which refers to the development of an adaptive regional management plan;

*RECALLING* Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/1 on further measures for the exploitation of red coral in the GFCM area of application, in particular paragraph 5 stating that the adaptive regional management plan should be based, whenever available, on national plans;

*RECALLING* Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/7 concerning the authorization for the use of remotely operated vehicles within the framework of national scientific research programmes on red coral;

*CONSIDERING* that the GFCM shall adopt management measures based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries to guarantee the maintenance of stocks above levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield;

*NOTING* that the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) acknowledged that the level of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) catches of red coral is likely to be high, which poses a significant threat to the red coral populations and to the authorized legal fishing activities;

*NOTING* that the SAC highlighted the usefulness of the Guidelines for the management of Mediterranean red coral populations as endorsed by the GFCM at its thirty-eighth session (FAO headquarters, May 2014) and reproduced in Appendix I of the report of the session;

*NOTING* that the SAC, at its nineteenth session (Slovenia, May 2017), acknowledged significant gaps in data submitted to the GFCM by the contracting parties and the cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) (e.g. regarding the overall quantities harvested by year and area and the percentage of undersized colonies);

*NOTING* that the SAC, at its nineteenth session, recalled the importance of strengthening the collection and reporting of catch and landing data, including to improve controls on board and/or at landing places, to increase the quality of data and soundness of monitoring and management measures;

*NOTING* that cooperation between researchers and professionals, including through an observer on board vessels programme, could promote and facilitate stakeholders involvement in the decision-making process with a view to enhancing the sense of ownership and compliance with the rules;

*NOTING* that the SAC, at its nineteenth session, endorsed the elements of a revised concept note on a research programme on red coral, and that the GFCM and CPCs play a relevant role in supporting the implementation of such a research programme aiming at improving scientific knowledge of currently exploited populations and at making comparisons with populations from countries where red coral harvesting has been prohibited;

*TAKING INTO ACCOUNT* the Guidelines on a general management framework and presentation of scientific information for multiannual management plans for sustainable fisheries in the GFCM area of application, adopted by the GFCM at its thirty-sixth session (Morocco, May 2012) ;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, the following recommendation:

## **PART I**

### **Subject matter, scope and definitions**

#### ***Subject matter and scope***

1. This recommendation shall establish an adaptive regional management plan (hereafter referred to as “plan”) for the sustainable exploitation of red coral populations in the Mediterranean Sea.
2. The plan shall be based on recommendations GFCM/35/2011/2, GFCM/36/2012/1 and GFCM/40/2016/7 on red coral.
3. This recommendation applies to all commercial fishing activities exploiting red coral in the whole GFCM area of application with the exclusion of the Black Sea.

#### ***Definitions***

4. For the purpose of this recommendation, the following definitions shall apply:
  - a) “red coral” means colonies pertaining to the species *Corallium rubrum*;

- b) “fishing authorization” means entitlement other than fishing licence and issued by CPCs to engage in fishing activities with specific fishing gear, during a specified period and in a given area or for a given fishery under specific conditions;
- c) “aAuthorized vessel” means a fishing vessel in possession of a specific fishing authorization; and
- d) “live weight” means the weight of recently caught colonies weighed immediately after the end of fishing operations and/or, at the latest, before being landed at the designated port in case of daily fishing trips. The weight refers, where possible, to clean colonies without epibiontic species or attached rocks.

## **PART II**

### **Specific objectives**

#### *Specific objectives*

- 5. The plan shall contribute to the objectives mentioned in Article 2 and the principles listed in Article 5 of the GFCM Agreement.
- 6. The plan shall contribute to improve scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge of the fisheries exploiting red coral.
- 7. In particular, the plan shall aim to:
  - a) apply the precautionary approach to fisheries management;
  - b) counteract or prevent overfishing with a view to ensuring long-term yields while maintaining the size of the populations within biologically sustainable levels; and
  - c) establish measures to adjust exploitation rates and fishing capacity to sustainable levels.

## **PART III**

### **Conservation measures**

#### *Catch limitations*

- 8. Each CPC may establish, in the Mediterranean Sea, an individual system of daily and/or annual catch limitation. In light of the results of the research programme foreseen in paragraph 28, the GFCM may decide to set up a general system of catch limitation.
- 9. Pending the SAC advice, in accordance with paragraph 25, the specific objectives set out in paragraph 7 above shall be attained while maintaining the fishing fleet capacity or fishing effort at the levels authorized and applied in recent years for the exploitation of red coral.

#### *Precautionary closures*

- 10. When the trigger catch level of red coral as defined in paragraph 11 has been reached, CPCs shall temporarily close the area concerned to any red coral fishing activity.
- 11. The trigger catch level shall apply when undersized specimens of red coral (i.e. colonies whose basal diameter is lower than 7 mm) exceeds 25 percent of the total catch harvested from a given red coral bank for a given year. Where red coral banks have not yet been properly identified, the trigger

catch level and the closure foreseen at paragraph 10 shall apply at the scale of rectangles of the GFCM statistical grid<sup>1</sup>.

12. On the basis of the information received, each CPC shall ensure that the necessary measures to implement the closures have been taken. The decision establishing precautionary closure shall define clearly the geographical area of the affected fishing ground, the duration of the closure and the conditions governing fisheries in that area during the closure.

13. CPCs establishing precautionary closures for red coral shall inform the GFCM Secretariat without delay. CPCs shall ensure that the master of the vessels and/or the national control authorities inform without delay the competent authority.

### ***Spatio-temporal closures***

14. Notwithstanding the spatio-temporal closures already established at the national level, the CPCs actively harvesting red coral shall introduce additional closures for the protection of red coral on the basis of the scientific advice available and not later than 1 January 2019.

## **PART IV Fleet management measures**

15. Fishers or fishing vessels authorized to harvest red coral in the Mediterranean Sea shall be indicated in a valid fishing authorization, which shall specify the technical conditions under which the fishery can be exerted. In the absence of such authorization, no vessel shall catch, retain on board, tranship, land, store or sell red coral.

16. CPCs shall maintain an updated register of fishing authorizations. CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 30 April of the current year, the list of vessels for which such authorization has been issued for the current and, in case, forthcoming year(s). This list will include for each vessel the information referred to in Annex to this recommendation.

17. Each CPC shall not increase the number of fishing authorizations until the scientific advice indicates a favourable status for the red coral populations.

18. Each CPC shall submit a detailed report of their fishing activities to the GFCM Secretariat by 30 June each year. Such report shall include at least information on the total catches and exploitation areas, and if possible the number of diving and their average catches.

## **PART V Control and enforcement**

### ***Authorized ports***

19. Without prejudice to paragraph 5 of Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/1 on the exploitation of red coral in the GFCM area of application, authorized fishers or fishing vessels shall only land red coral catches in authorized ports of CPCs. To this end, each CPC shall designate ports in which landing red coral is authorized and communicate a list of these ports to the GFCM Secretariat by 30 April of each year, when there is a change in the designated ports already communicated, in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/1.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/gfcm/data/map-statistical-grid/en/>

20. Between two and four hours before landing in a port, the fishing vessels or their representative shall notify the relevant authorities of the following information:

- a) estimated time of arrival;
- b) external identification number and the name of the fishing vessel;
- c) estimated quantity in live weight and if possible number of colonies retained on board; and
- d) information on the geographical area where the catches took place.

#### ***Recording of catches***

21. CPCs shall ensure that the fishers or masters of the vessels authorized to harvest red coral have the obligation to record catches in live weight and, if possible, the number of colonies after fishing operations and/or, at the latest, when landed at the port, in case of daily fishing operations.

22. Without prejudice to paragraph 2 of Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM logbook, amending Recommendation GFCM/34/2010/1, each CPC shall ensure a mechanism to record in the logbook all red coral daily catches, irrespective of the live weight of the harvest.

#### ***Control of landings***

23. Each CPC shall establish a programme based on risk analysis, in particular to verify the landings and validate the logbooks.

#### ***Transshipment***

24. Transshipment operations at sea of red coral shall be prohibited.

### **PART VI Scientific information**

25. CPCs with fishing fleets targeting red coral shall ensure that a mechanism for adequate scientific monitoring of fisheries products and catches is duly in place with a view to allowing the SAC to provide descriptive information and advice on at least the following:

- a) deployed fishing effort (e.g. number of fishing dives/week) and the overall catch level by stock at local, national or supranational levels;
- b) conservation and management reference points with a view to improving the regional management plan, in line with objective of maximum sustainable yield and low risk of stock collapse;
- c) biological and socio-economic effects of alternative management scenarios, including input/output and/or technical measures, as proposed by the CPCs; and
- d) possible spatio-temporal closures in order to preserve fishery sustainability.

26. In 2019, the SAC shall provide adequate catch levels in accordance with the available scientific knowledge and with the objectives defined in part II of this recommendation.

27. By the forty-third session of the GFCM, in 2019, the SAC shall provide an updated status of the red coral populations of the main harvesting countries, including an updated advice on the conservation measures established as per paragraphs 8 and 14.

28. The GFCM Secretariat, with the support of the SAC, shall provide terms of reference, including costs, services and other requirements to support, through a call for tender, the implementation of a research programme on red coral in the Mediterranean Sea, as described in Appendix 7 of the report of the nineteenth session of the SAC. The research programme shall be launched in 2018.

29. Until 31 December 2020, the use of remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) shall be exclusively allowed to observation for scientific purposes and shall only be authorized by the CPCs in the context of research programmes led by scientific institutions. Such authorization shall be without prejudice to stricter measures adopted by the CPCs.

30. The commercialisation of red coral harvested within research programmes shall be strictly forbidden.

31. Each CPC intending to use ROVs pursuant to paragraph 29 shall submit the following information to the GFCM Secretariat, at least 20 days before the start of the campaign. The GFCM Secretariat shall, in turn, communicate such information without delay to all CPCs:

- a) list of vessels authorized to use ROVs;
- b) duration of the research campaign mission implying the use of ROVs; and
- c) identification of the areas where ROVs will be used for research purposes.

32. Each year, the SAC shall assess the use of ROVs in accordance with paragraph 29 and report to the Commission.

33. CPCs may deploy national scientific observers onboard vessels harvesting red coral in the Mediterranean Sea. In this case, CPCs are encouraged to report the information collected to the GFCM Secretariat.

## **PART VII**

### **Final provision**

34. This plan shall be assessed by the SAC and, if necessary, reviewed by the GFCM at its forty-third session in 2019.

35. In light of the results of the research programme referred to in paragraph 28, the GFCM may propose and adopt new appropriate control measures, including the geolocalization of fishing activities and the monitoring of the prescribed size of red coral colonies.

Subject to more detailed provisions under the GFCM data collection programme, the list referred to in paragraph 17 shall contain, for each vessel, the following information:

- Vessel name
- Vessel register number (code assigned by the CPCs)
- GFCM registration number (country ISO 3-alpha code + 9 digits, e.g. xxx000000001)
- Port of registration (full name of the port)
- Previous name (if any)
- Previous flag (if any)
- Previous details of deletion from other registers (if any)
- International radio call sign (if any)
- VMS or other equipment for vessel geolocalization (indicate Y/N)
- Vessel type, length overall (LOA), gross tonnage (GT) and engine power expressed in kW
- Safety and security equipment to host observer(s) on board (indicate Y/N)
- Time period authorized for fishing red coral
- Area(s) authorized for fishing red coral: geographical subarea and rectangle of the GFCM statistical grid
- Participation in research programmes led by national/international scientific institutions (indicate Y/N; provide some description)

**Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/6**  
**on the submission of data on fishing activities in the GFCM area of application**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

*CONSIDERING* that rational management for sustainable fisheries is dependent on the scientific utilization of relevant data on fishing fleet capacity, on the fishing activities carried out, on the status of exploited biological resources and on the social and economic situation of fisheries;

*RECALLING* the subregional approach to fisheries management as enshrined in the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement), with a view to better addressing the specificities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region;

*NOTING* the importance of multidisciplinary data and information to monitor and assess fisheries and fisheries resources and to ensure their sustainable exploitation;

*RECOGNIZING* the need to develop a GFCM database, on the basis of the information received from contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) according to a standardized format;

*FURTHER RECOGNIZING* the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) as an instrument supporting the implementation of the mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries (mid-term strategy) through the identification and collection of fisheries-related data necessary to improve the formulation of sound scientific advice by relevant GFCM subsidiary bodies;

*CONSIDERING* that a timely submission of complete data and the analysis of the status of fisheries and exploited resources are of paramount importance for the effectiveness and credibility of GFCM management measures;

*TAKING INTO ACCOUNT* the importance of the classification priority species groups as identified by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC), of the use of the GFCM fleet segmentation for the collection of economic and biological data, as well as of the use of standard nominal fishing effort measurement;

*NOTING* that relevant data on fishing fleets, red coral and common dolphinfish as identified by the SAC in the DCRF are already requested under existing recommendations GFCM/30/2006/2 on the establishment of a closed season for common dolphinfish fisheries using fish aggregating devices, GFCM/33/2009/5 on the establishment of the GFCM regional fleet register, GFCM/33/2009/6 concerning the establishment of a GFCM record of vessels over 15 metres authorized to operate in the GFCM area of application, amending Recommendation GFCM/29/2005/2, and GFCM/36/2012/1 on further measures for the exploitation of red coral in the GFCM area of application;

*RECALLING* the decision taken by the Commission at its fortieth session to adopt, for a one-year period, Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/2 on the progressive implementation of data submission in line with the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework, and to reconsider its contents at its forty-first session;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, the following recommendation:

1. CPCs shall submit to the GFCM Secretariat national data on catch, incidental catch of vulnerable species, fishing effort, socio-economic and biological information (as specified in Annex 1)

for the first time in 2018, and subsequently each calendar year. Such submission shall be done in accordance with appropriate data submission standards, procedures and protocols to be made available online by the GFCM Secretariat. Data shall be compiled following the specifications on the GFCM fleet segmentation (Annex 2) and on fishing effort measurement (Annex 3).

2. In addition to the data mentioned above, CPCs shall submit to the GFCM Secretariat for the first time in 2018, and subsequently each calendar year, information needed to assess the status of those stocks considered priority by the Commission. Such submission shall be done using the stock assessment form (SAF) made available online by the GFCM Secretariat and following the data structure specified in Annex 5.

3. CPCs shall submit the data referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 according to submission specifications (reporting schedule, reference year and frequency) as defined in Annex 4. With a view to ensuring consistency of the time series in the GFCM database, populated with data submitted in line with Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/3 on the implementation of the GFCM Task 1 statistical matrix and repealing Resolution GFCM/31/2007/1 up to the 2015 reference year, the first data submission in 2018 shall also cover the preceding two-year timeframe, i.e. 2016 and 2017.

4. The quality of data submitted pursuant to this recommendation shall be regularly assessed with a view to ensuring the formulation of scientific advice for the Commission.

5. Relevant GFCM subsidiary bodies may draw the attention of the Commission to the possible need for any revision of Annexes 1–5 to this recommendation in order to ensure the effectiveness of data collection and analysis.

6. Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/3 is hereby repealed.

7. All references to the Task 1 statistical matrix and Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/3 found in previous GFCM recommendations and resolutions will be automatically replaced by references to the DCRF upon the entry into force of this recommendation.

## GFCM DATA FIELDS (DCRF TASKS)

The data variables listed below are those that should be submitted to the GFCM Secretariat following the guidance provided by the relevant GFCM subsidiary bodies through the DCRF manual, including field definitions, list of species (groups 1, 2 and 3 by GFCM subregion), fishing gear, vulnerable species, shared stocks. In line with the GFCM data confidentiality policy and procedures, the “data confidentiality status” identifies the access-level criteria for the sake of data dissemination: Public (P), Semi-private (S), Private (R).

DATA FIELDS (DCRF tasks and subtasks)		MANDATORY (X)	DATA CONFIDENTIALITY STATUS	
<i>Global figures of national fisheries</i>	Number of vessels	X	P	
	Total landings	X	P	
	Total capacity (GT)	X	P	
	Total engine power (kW)	X	P	
<i>Catch</i>	<b>Total landing</b> <i>(by GSA and fleet segment)</i>	Number of vessels	X	P
		Total landings	X	P
	<b>Catch per species</b> <i>(by GSA and fleet segment)</i>	Species	X	P
		Total landings per species	X	P
		Total discards per species (if any)	X	S
		Total catch per species	X	P
<i>Incidental catch of vulnerable species (by GSA and fleet segment)<sup>1</sup></i>	Date	X	P	
	Source of data	X	S	
	Fishing gear (if available)	X	P	
	Group of vulnerable species <sup>1</sup>	X	P	
	Family (if available)	X	P	
	Species (if available)	X	P	
	Total number of individuals caught	X	P	
	Total weight of individuals caught (if available)	X	P	
	Number of individuals released alive (if available)	X	S	
	Number of dead individuals (if available)	X	S	
	Number of individuals released in unknown status (if available)	X	S	
<i>Effort</i>	<b>Fleet segment</b> <i>(by GSA and fleet segment)</i>	Fishing days	X	S
		Capacity	X	P
		Activity	X	S
		Nominal effort	X	S
		Number of vessels	X	P
	<b>Fishing gear</b> <i>(by GSA)</i>	Fishing gear	X	S
		Fishing days (by fishing gear)	X	S
	<b>CPUE</b> <i>(by GSA)<sup>2</sup></i>	Fishing gear	X	P
		Species <sup>2</sup>	X	P
		Nominal effort	X	S
		CPUE	X	S

<sup>1</sup> Mandatory for the GFCM vulnerable species

<sup>2</sup> Mandatory for the species of group 1 and group 2

DATA FIELDS (DCRF tasks and subtasks)		MANDATORY (X)	DATA CONFIDENTIALITY STATUS	
<b>Socio- economics</b>	<b>Economic and social data</b> <i>(by GSA and fleet segment)</i>	Capacity (gross tonnage)	X	P
		Capacity (engine power)	X	P
		Number of vessels	X	P
		Total landing value	X	S
		Total days at sea	X	S
	<b>Operating costs</b> <i>(by GSA and fleet segment)</i>	Number of vessels	X	P
		Personnel costs	X	R
		Fuel consumption (if available)	X	R
		Fuel price (if available)	X	R
		Total fuel cost (if available)	X	R
		Repair and maintenance costs	X	R
		Commercial costs	X	R
		Other variable costs	X	R
		Capital costs	X	R
		Value of physical capital	X	R
		Fixed costs	X	R
		Employment	X	R
		Currency	X	S
	<b>Species value</b> <i>(by GSA and fleet segment)<sup>3</sup></i>	Number of vessels	X	P
		Species <sup>3</sup>	X	P
		Total landing volume	X	P
		Total landing value	X	S
		Prices by commercial species	X	S
		Currency	X	S
	<b>Other economic aspects</b> <i>(by GSA and fleet segment)</i>	Operating subsidies		R
		Investments in physical capital		R
		Other income		R
		Full-time equivalent (FTE)		S
		Number of persons in the crew < 25 years-old		S
		Number of persons in the crew 25-40 years-old		S
		Number of persons in the crew > 40 years-old		S
		Currency		S
	<b>Biological information</b>	<b>Length data</b> <i>(by GSA)<sup>4</sup></i>	Source of data	X
Name of the scientific survey (if any)			X	S
Fleet segment (only if from fishery- dependent data)			X	S
Species <sup>4</sup>			X	S
Length			X	S
Number of individuals sampled (per length classes)			X	S
Weight of individuals sampled (per length classes)			X	S
Number of individuals expanded (per length classes)			X	S

<sup>3</sup> Mandatory for the species of group 1 and 2

<sup>4</sup> Mandatory for the species of group 1, 2 and 3

DATA FIELDS (DCRF tasks and subtasks)		MANDATORY (X)	DATA CONFIDENTIALITY STATUS	
<i>Biological information</i>	<b>Size at first maturity</b> <i>(by GSA)<sup>5</sup></i>	Species <sup>5</sup>	X	P
		Sex	X	S
		L <sub>50</sub>	X	S
		Reference (if any)	X	S
	<b>Maturity data</b> <i>(by GSA)<sup>5</sup></i>	Source of data	X	S
		Name of the scientific survey (if any)	X	P
		Fleet segment (only if from fishery- dependent data)	X	P
		Species <sup>5</sup>	X	P
		Length	X	S
		Sex	X	S
		Maturity <sup>6</sup>	X	S
		Number of individuals sampled (per length class, sex and maturity stage)	X	S
		Weight of individuals sampled (per length class, sex and maturity stage)	X	S
		Number of individuals expanded (per length class, sex and maturity stage)	X	S
	<b>European eel</b>	Habitat	X	P
		Site	X	P
		Gear type	X	P
		Mesh size (if any)	X	S
		Number of fishermen	X	S
		Fishing days	X	S
Average number of “gear units” per day per fisherman (if any)		X	S	
Total catch of silver eel (if any)		X	P	
Total catch of yellow eel (if any)		X	P	
Total catch of glass eel (if any)	X	P		

<sup>5</sup> Mandatory for the species of group 1.

<sup>6</sup> Following the scale of maturity stages (DCRF manual).

**GFCM fleet segmentation**  
(Combination of vessel groups and length classes)

VESSEL GROUPS			LENGTH CLASSES (LOA)			
			< 6 m	6 - 12 m	12-24 m	> 24 m
Polyvalent	P	Small-scale vessels without engine using passive gear	P-01	P-02	P-03	P-04
		<i>P-13</i>				
		Small-scale vessels with engine using passive gear	P-05	P-06	P-07	P-08
		Polyvalent vessels	P-09	P-10	P-11	P-12
			<i>P-14</i>			
Seiners	S	Purse seiners	S-01	S-02	S-03	S-04
		<i>S-09</i>				
		Tuna seiners	S-05	S-06	S-07	S-08
			<i>S-10</i>			
Dredgers	D	Dredgers	D-01	D-02	D-03	D-04
		<i>D-05</i>				
Trawlers	T	Beam trawlers	T-01	T-02	T-03	T-04
		Pelagic trawlers	T-05	T-06	T-07	T-08
		<i>T-13</i>				
		Trawlers	T-09	T-10	T-11	T-12
Longliners	L	Longliners	L-01	L-02	L-03	L-04
				<i>L-05</i>		

Note

- A vessel is assigned to a group on the basis of the dominant gear used in terms of percentage of time: more than 50 percent of the time at sea using the same fishing gear during the year.
- “Polyvalent vessels” are defined as all the vessels using more than one gear, with a combination of passive and active gear, none of which exceeding more than 50 percent of the time at sea during the year.
- A vessel is considered “active” when it executes at least one fishing operation during the reference year in the GFCM area of application.
- The yellow cells contain the codes of reported fleet segments which should be included in the GFCM data submission. If necessary, fleet segments as identified in the orange cells can be used: P-13 (P-01 + P-02), P-14 (P-11 + P-12), S-09 (S-03 + S-04), S-10 (S-07 + S-08), D-05 (D-02 + D-03), T-13 (T-06 + T-07 + T-08) and L-05 (L-02 + L-03 + L-04). Any proposal for a different aggregation of fleet segments should be brought to the attention of the relevant GFCM subsidiary bodies, mentioning the rationale and corresponding references (e.g. existing scientific studies), which in turn should confirm the similarity/homogeneity of the combined cells.

Table on fishing effort measurement

*Effort measurement by fleet segment*

FLEET SEGMENTS		EFFORT MEASUREMENTS			
Vessel groups		Length classes (LOA)	Unit of capacity	Unit of activity	Nominal effort
P	Small-scale vessels without engine using passive gear	All	Net length <sup>1</sup>	Fishing days	Net length x Fishing days
	Small-scale vessels with engine using passive gear		Number of traps/pots <sup>1</sup>	Fishing days	Number of traps/pots x Fishing days
	Polyvalent vessels		Number of lines <sup>1</sup>	Fishing days	Number of lines x Fishing days
S	Purse seiners Tuna seiners	All	GT	Number of fishing sets <sup>2</sup>	GT x Number of fishing sets
D	Dredgers	All	GT	Fishing days	GT x Fishing days
T	Beam trawlers Pelagic trawlers Trawlers	All	GT	Fishing days	GT x Fishing days
L	Longliners	All	Number of hooks <sup>1</sup>	Fishing days	Number of hooks x Fishing days

<sup>1</sup> Should this information not be available, "GT" may be used as capacity unit upon approval by relevant GFCM subsidiary bodies on a case by case basis.

<sup>2</sup> Should this information not be available, "fishing days" may be used as activity unit upon approval by relevant GFCM subsidiary bodies on a case by case basis.

*Effort measurement by fishing gear*

Fishing gear		Gear code	Unit of capacity	Unit of activity	Nominal effort
Surrounding nets	With purse lines (purse seines)	PS	GT	Number of fishing sets <sup>1</sup>	GT x Number of fishing sets
	One boat operated purse seines	PS1			
	Two boats operated purse seines	PS2			
	Without purse lines (lampara)	LA			
Seine nets	Beach seines	SB	Net length <sup>2</sup>	Fishing days	Net length x Fishing days
	Boat or vessel seines	SV			
	Danish seines	SDN			
	Scottish seines	SSC			
	Pair seines	SPR			
	Seine nets (not specified)	SX			
Trawls	Bottom trawls	TB	GT	Fishing days	GT x Fishing days
	Bottom beam trawls	TBB			
	Bottom otter trawls	OTB			
	Bottom pair trawls	PTB			
	Bottom nephrops trawls	TBN			
	Bottom shrimp trawls	TBS			
	Midwater trawls	TM			
	Midwater otter trawls	OTM			
	Midwater pair trawls	PTM			
	Midwater shrimp trawls	TMS			
	Otter twin trawls	OTT			
	Otter trawls (not specified)	OT			
	Pair trawls (not specified)	PT			
	Other trawls (not specified)	TX			
Dredges	Boat dredges	DRB	GT	Fishing days	GT x Fishing days
	Mechanised dredges	HMD			
	Hand dredges	DRH			
Gillnets and entangling nets	Set gillnets (anchored)	GNS	Net length <sup>2</sup>	Fishing days	Net length x Fishing days
	Driftnets	GND			
	Encircling gillnets	GNC			
	Fixed gillnets (on stakes)	GNF			
	Trammel nets	GTR			
	Combined gillnets-trammel nets	GTN			
	Gillnets and entangling nets (not specified)	GEN			
	Gillnets (not specified)	GN			
Traps	Stationary uncovered pound nets	FPN	Number of traps/pots <sup>2</sup>	Fishing days	Number of traps/pots x Fishing days
	Pots	FPO			
	Fyke nets	FYK			
	Stow nets	FSN			
	Barrier, fences, weirs, etc	FWR			
	Aerial traps	FAR			
	Traps (not specified)	FIX			
Hooks and lines	Handlines and pole-lines (hand operated)	LHP		Fishing days	

<sup>1</sup> Should this information not be available, “fishing days” may be used as activity unit upon approval by relevant GFCM subsidiary bodies on a case by case basis.

<sup>2</sup> Should this information not be available, “GT” may be used as capacity unit upon approval by relevant GFCM subsidiary bodies on a case by case basis.

Fishing gear		Gear code	Unit of capacity	Unit of activity	Nominal effort
	Handlines and pole-lines (mechanised)	LHM	Number of lines <sup>2</sup>		Number of lines x Fishing days
	Trolling lines	LTL			
	Set longlines	LLS	Number of hooks <sup>2</sup>	Fishing days	Number of hooks x Fishing days
	Drifting longlines	LLD			
	Longlines (not specified)	LL			
	Hooks and lines (not specified)	LX			

### Data submission calendar

Each calendar year (n), the requested data, as specified in Annex 2 and pertaining to the year before submission (n-1), shall be submitted to the GFCM Secretariat on the basis of the following schedule:

- May
  - Global figures of national fisheries
  - Socio-economics – Species value<sup>1</sup>
  - Socio-economics – Other economic aspects<sup>1</sup>
  - Socio-economics – Operating costs<sup>1</sup>
- June
  - Catch – Landing data
  - Catch – Catch data per species
  - Effort – Fleet segment
  - Effort – Fishing gear
  - Effort – CPUE
- July
  - Incidental catch of vulnerable species
  - Biological information – Length data
  - Biological information – Size at first maturity
  - Biological information – Maturity data
- September
  - Biological information – Stock assessment form<sup>2</sup>
  - Biological information – European eel
- November
  - Socio-economics – Economic and social data

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<sup>1</sup> Data should refer to the reference year n-2 and their submission should take place on a biennial basis only for those countries that do not have annual economic surveys in place. Countries collecting these data on a yearly basis are requested to submit them annually (keeping reference year n-2).

<sup>2</sup> The date of data submission is linked to the scheduling of the GFCM stock assessment working groups and therefore may differ from one year to another.

**Stock assessment forms**

The stock assessment forms (SAFs) to be used to submit the information required to assess the status of those stocks considered as priority stocks by the Commission shall be provided by relevant GFCM subsidiary bodies according to the following structure:

- basic identification data;
- stock identification and biological information (stock unit, growth and maturity);
- fisheries information (description of the fleet, historical trends, management measures, reference points);
- fisheries independent information (name, brief description of the chosen method and assumptions used, spatial distribution of the resources, historical trends);
- ecological information (protected species potentially affected by the fisheries, environmental indexes);
- stock assessment (name of the model, model assumptions, scripts, input data and parameters, tuning data, results, robustness analysis, retrospective analysis, comparison between model runs, sensitivity analysis, assessment quality);
- stock predictions (short, medium, and long term); and
- draft scientific advice.

SAFs shall be revised by relevant GFCM subsidiary bodies on a regular basis and their most updated version will be disseminated online by the GFCM Secretariat.

**Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7**  
**on a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

*DEEPLY CONCERNED* that illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing continues to undermine national and regional management of fish stocks, marine ecosystems and the livelihoods of legitimate fishers, and that these activities diminish the effectiveness of the GFCM conservation and management measures;

*TAKING NOTE* that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), has drafted an International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU), which recognizes that IUU fishing leads to the loss of short- and long- term social and economic opportunities and has negative effects on food security;

*TAKING FURTHER NOTE* that the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 recognizes the need to combat IUU fishing in order to ensure prosperity, food security and sustainability for all;

*ACKNOWLEDGING* that states have the duty, under international law, to cooperate through regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) in order to promote responsible fishing practices;

*ACKNOWLEDGING FURTHER* the principles and international standards of responsible fishing practices enshrined in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the FAO international plans of action, the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance, the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Catch Documentation Schemes and the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication;

*WELCOMING* the declaration by the FAO of an International Day for the fight against IUU fishing, which would be celebrated annually on 5 June, to raise awareness on the threats associated to IUU fishing and to reach out to the public through campaigns and initiatives at the regional level;

*RECALLING* that the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration and the Bucharest Declaration both reflect the strong commitment of the GFCM to fight IUU fishing in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, respectively;

*BEARING IN MIND* that a regional plan of action to combat IUU fishing (RPOA-IUU) is an important link between the implementation of the IPOA-IUU and the national plans of action and corresponding national measures on IUU fishing that all states and regional economic integration organizations are encouraged to develop;

*BEARING IN MIND FURTHER* that the RPOA-IUU should be conceived as an evolutionary policy instrument that could, in due course, be developed further so as to include linkages with measures such as co-management and marine protected areas, which also have the potential to contribute to deter IUU fishing;

*NOTING* that the GFCM has adopted Resolution GFCM/40/2016/2 for a mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries which includes a specific target on curbing IUU fishing through a RPOA-IUU;

*ADOPTS*, in accordance with Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement), the following recommendation:

## **PART I** **General provisions**

### *Use of terms*

1. For the purpose of this plan, terms are defined in accordance with the definitions already given in other relevant international agreements and in existing GFCM recommendations.
2. The contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties are henceforth referred to as the “CPCs”.

### *Objective*

3. The objective of this plan is the prevention, deterrence and elimination of IUU fishing in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea by providing CPCs with comprehensive, effective and transparent measures through which to take action, thereby contributing to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources and marine ecosystems in the region, in accordance with Article 2 of the GFCM Agreement.

### *Application and scope*

4. The geographic scope of this plan is the geographic scope of the GFCM area of application, which comprises all marine waters of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, in accordance with Article 3 of the GFCM Agreement.
5. This plan shall be applied in a fair, timely, transparent and non-discriminatory manner, consistent with international law.

## **PART II** **All state responsibilities**

### *Implementation of relevant international instruments*

6. This plan is consistent with existing international fisheries instruments relevant to the sustainable management of marine living resources and the elimination of IUU fishing. The CPCs shall, to the extent possible, fully and effectively implement these instruments and give effect to the relevant norms of international law in order to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.
7. This plan is consistent with existing GFCM recommendations, resolutions and decisions relevant to the sustainable management of marine living resources in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The CPCs shall fully and effectively implement these instruments, in particular those relating to the elimination of IUU fishing, including but not limited to the following:
  - a) Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/1 on a regional scheme on port state measures to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities in the GFCM area of application;
  - b) Resolution GFCM/40/2016/2 for a mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, with particular emphasis to be given to Target 3 which deals with curbing IUU fishing and harmonizing the existing measures to improve monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), reinforcing inspection procedures within the framework of port

state control, and enhancing modular MCS at the regional level including through a regional vessel monitoring system (VMS) and control system;

- c) Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/3 on the establishment of a set of measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in turbot fisheries in the Black Sea;
- d) Resolution GFCM/38/2014/1 on guidelines on vessel monitoring system and related control systems in the GFCM area of application;
- e) Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM logbook, amending Recommendation GFCM/34/2010/1;
- f) Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/5 on the establishment of the GFCM regional fleet register;
- g) Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/6 concerning the establishment of a GFCM record of vessels over 15 metres authorized to operate in the GFCM area of application, amending Recommendation GFCM/29/2005/2;
- h) Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7 concerning minimum standards for the establishment of a vessel monitoring system in the GFCM area of application;
- i) Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/8 on the establishment of a list of vessels presumed to have carried out illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application, repealing Recommendation GFCM/30/2006/4; and
- j) two roadmaps which have been adopted by the GFCM for the purpose of fighting IUU fishing in the Black Sea (thirty-seventh session of the GFCM [Croatia, May 2013]) and in the Mediterranean Sea (thirty-eighth session of the GFCM [FAO headquarters, May 2014]).

#### ***CPCs national legislation***

8. The CPCs shall take measures to ensure that their national legal systems have measures that address effectively all aspects relating to the fight against IUU fishing, including the use of available evidence against vessels engaged in IUU fishing activities.

#### ***CPCs control over nationals***

9. The CPCs shall take measures to ensure that nationals who are subject to their jurisdiction do not support or engage in IUU fishing.

10. The CPCs shall cooperate with each other and with the GFCM Secretariat to identify and discourage those nationals who are the operators and/or beneficial owners of vessels involved in IUU fishing.

11. The CPCs shall take measures to identify and discourage their nationals from flagging fishing vessels under the jurisdiction of a state that does not meet its flag state responsibilities.

12. The CPCs shall avoid conferring any legal, financial or administrative support, including subsidies, on natural and legal persons that are involved in IUU fishing.

#### ***Vessels without nationality***

13. The CPCs shall take measures consistent with international law in relation to vessels without nationality involved in IUU fishing activities, according to Article 20 of the IPOA-IUU.

### ***CPCs measures to sanction vessels engaged in IUU fishing activities***

14. The CPCs shall ensure that sanctions against vessels engaged in IUU fishing activities as well as nationals under their jurisdiction are of sufficient severity to effectively prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing and to deprive offenders of the benefits accruing from such fishing. This may include the adoption of a civil sanction regime based on an administrative penalty scheme, in accordance with Article 21 of the IPOA-IUU.

15. The CPCs shall ensure the consistent and transparent application of sanctions, in particular against the following serious violations:

- a) fishing without a valid license, authorization or permit issued by the flag state;
- b) failing to maintain accurate records of catch and catch-related data, as required by GFCM recommendations, or serious misreporting of catch, contrary to GFCM catch reporting requirements;
- c) fishing in a closed area, fishing during a closed season;
- d) fishing for stocks which are subject to multiannual management plans adopted by the GFCM in a manner that undermines their implementation;
- e) using prohibited fishing gear or falsifying or concealing the markings as well as the identity or registration of a fishing vessel;
- f) concealing, tampering with or disposing of evidence relating to IUU fishing activities; and
- g) multiple violations which together constitute a serious disregard of GFCM recommendations or such other violations as may be specified in procedures and requirements established by the GFCM.

### ***CPC measures on monitoring, control and surveillance***

16. The CPCs shall undertake comprehensive and effective monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing from its commencement, through the point of landing, to final destination in accordance with Article 24 of the IPOA-IUU, including by:

- a) developing and implementing schemes for access to waters and resources, including authorization schemes for vessels;
- b) maintaining records of all vessels and their current owners and operators authorized to undertake fishing subject to their jurisdiction;
- c) implementing a VMS, in accordance with the regional standards adopted by the GFCM, including the requirement for vessels under their jurisdiction to carry VMS on board;
- d) implementing observer programmes, in case of GFCM recommendations and/or CPCs measures, with the requirement that vessels under their jurisdiction carry observers on board;
- e) providing training and education to all persons involved in MCS operations;
- f) planning, funding and undertaking MCS operations;
- g) promoting understanding of monitoring, control and surveillance issues within national judicial systems;

- h) establishing and maintaining systems for the acquisition, storage and dissemination of MCS data; and
- i) ensuring the effective implementation of national boarding and inspection regimes, including in conjunction with Part VII of this RPOA-IUU.

### **PART III**

#### **Flag state responsibilities**

##### ***Flag state jurisdiction***

17. This plan shall be interpreted and applied in conformity with international law dealing with flag state jurisdiction. Each CPC shall, in its capacity as a CPC flag state, ensure to the extent possible that international laws describing flag state responsibilities have been incorporated into their national laws, regulations, permits and practices.

18. The CPC flag state shall ensure that vessels entitled to fly its flags do not undermine the effectiveness of regional conservation and management measures adopted by the GFCM, including by supporting and/or engaging in IUU fishing.

19. A CPC flag state shall ensure that each of the vessels entitled to fly its flag fishing in waters outside its jurisdiction holds a valid authorization for this purpose. CPC flag states fishing in the waters of another CPC shall be duly and preventively authorized by the CPC coastal state and respect its jurisdiction and national legislation.

20. The CPC flag state shall effectively exercise its jurisdiction and control over vessels flying its flag.

##### ***Fishing activity and vessel data***

21. The CPC flag states shall take such measures to ensure that: a) vessels do not engage in fishing activities before their registration; b) vessels with history of non-compliance are not flagged; c) chartered vessels do not engage in IUU fishing; d) reflagging and flag-hopping of vessels is prevented; and e) vessels are duly registered in national records as well as the GFCM record of fishing vessels.

22. The CPC flag states shall maintain records of fishing vessels including, *inter alia*, the following information: previous names of the vessels, names/addresses/nationalities of owners, names/addresses/nationality of the natural or legal persons responsible for managing the operations of the vessel, vessel dimensions and where applicable, photos taken at the time of registration of the vessel or at the time of the conclusion of any recent structural alterations, showing a side profile view of the vessel, in accordance with Article VI of the FAO Compliance Agreement and Article 42 of the IPOA-IUU.

23. The CPC flag states shall establish a national record of fishing vessels entitled to fly their flag and authorized to fish in the GFCM area of application, including vessels of other states authorized under charter agreements, where appropriate, and this material shall be constantly monitored for additions, deletions, modifications or errors, and regularly transmitted to the GFCM Secretariat.

24. Comprehensive and accurate fishing activity and vessel data lodged with the GFCM Secretariat are necessary for the maintenance, monitoring and cross-checking of flag state databases as well as the GFCM compilation of reliable fishing statistics. All CPCs shall ensure that they fully address the data submission requirements of the GFCM as foreseen under relevant GFCM recommendations and resolutions, including:

- a) annual submission of a full dataset, plus regular updates on vessels listed in the GFCM regional fleet register, in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/5;
- b) electronic submission of a list of vessels over 15 metres that are authorized to fish in the GFCM area of application, in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/6; and
- c) list of vessels presumed to have carried out IUU fishing in the GFCM area of application, in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/8.

***Awareness of relevant personnel***

25. The CPC flag states shall establish and publicize procedures of the national, regional and international obligations that are incumbent upon vessel owners, operators and crews and their vessels. CPC flag states shall ensure that such information is clearly communicated to any person or entity deemed relevant so that they are informed and able to meet their national, regional and international obligations.

***Enforcement actions by the flag state***

26. The CPC flag states shall ensure that they have in place a law enforcement regime that includes:
- a) the capacity to detect violations of national fisheries laws, including regulations, permits and practices, as well as of international fisheries instruments and GFCM recommendations; and
  - b) a system of sanctions applicable in respect of violations that is adequate in severity to secure compliance and to discourage violations wherever they occur thereby depriving offenders of the benefits accruing from IUU fishing activities.

***Flag state performance***

27. The CPC flag states should be encouraged to engage in a transparent process of voluntary performance assessment through the GFCM, upon their request and if they so wish, in accordance with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance.

**PART IV**  
**Coastal state responsibilities**

***Coastal state measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing***

28. CPC coastal states shall take measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing from occurring in waters under their jurisdiction. Such measures include ensuring that:
- a) they have the ability to conduct effective MCS of all fishing activities in their waters;
  - b) they ensure cooperation and exchange information with other CPCs and the GFCM Secretariat;
  - c) they ensure that no vessels undertake fishing activities in their waters without a valid authorization to fish;
  - d) they authorize fishing in waters covered by GFCM rules only vessels not flying their flag when such vessels have been entered on the national and GFCM regional fleet register;
  - e) they do not authorize vessels with a history of non-compliance to engage in fishing activities in their waters;

- f) they ensure that each vessel fishing in their waters maintains a logbook recording its fishing activities where appropriate;
- g) they authorize, duly monitor and control at-sea transshipment and processing of fish and fish products in their waters; and
- h) they have regulations governing fishing activities in their waters to prevent IUU fishing.

**PART V**  
**Port state responsibilities**

***Regional scheme on port state measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing in the GFCM area of application***

29. Each CPC shall, in its capacity as a port state, fully and effectively implement the GFCM regional scheme on port state measures contained in Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/1. The provisions of this recommendation have been aligned with the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (FAO Port State Measures Agreement [PSMA]).
30. The CPCs that have ratified or acceded to the PSMA shall fully implement this agreement.
31. The CPCs that have not yet ratified or acceded to the PSMA are urged to do so.

***Cooperation between port and flag states and the GFCM Secretariat***

32. The CPC port states have a duty to cooperate with the GFCM Secretariat and CPC flag states in order to strengthen control over vessels and prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing, including via the GFCM mutual assistance system.
33. In the exercise of their inspection rights, and where the CPC port state has reasonable evidence for believing that a vessel has engaged in or supported IUU fishing in the GFCM area of application, the port state will immediately transmit the results of the inspection, without delay, to the flag state of the vessel and the GFCM Secretariat.
34. The CPC flag and port states shall fully cooperate with each other and with the GFCM Secretariat regarding the exchange of information pursuant to a CPC port state inspection. In this regard, the GFCM Secretariat shall develop a system for the exchange and collection of port state data.
35. Following the CPC port state inspection, if the CPC flag state receives an inspection report which suggests that there are grounds for believing that its vessel has engaged in IUU fishing, the CPC flag state shall immediately and fully investigate the matter and shall, upon sufficient evidence, take enforcement actions without delay in accordance with its national laws and regulations, and in full communication with the GFCM Secretariat through the GFCM mutual assistance system.

**PART VI**  
**Market-related measures relating to fishery products**

***Market-related cooperation***

36. IUU fishing catches shall be minimized by CPCs and the GFCM Secretariat collaborating together in the implementation of regional market measures designed to identify, track, validate and promote Mediterranean and Black Sea fish catches at each step of the value and marketing chain.
37. The GFCM Secretariat shall:

- a) collaborate with the CPCs with the aim of drafting in due course a catch documentation scheme, to be subsequently validated by CPCs, that complies with the principles, rights and obligations under international law as defined in the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Catch Documentation Schemes and contains information that would help demonstrate the legality of fish and fish products entering the market. For this purpose, due account should be taken of existing catch documentation schemes developed by CPCs; and
  - b) further collaborate with competent organizations, where appropriate and following CPCs approval, for the purpose of monitoring and analysing existing regional markets and trade flows and the strengthening of marketing measures for legal fish and fish products.
38. The CPC market states shall:
- a) take all steps that are necessary, and consistent with international law, to prevent that fish caught by vessels that are suspected or proven to have engaged in IUU fishing be traded or imported within their territories;
  - b) take steps to improve the transparency of their markets for the purpose of allowing the traceability of fish and fish products;
  - c) collaborate with each other as well as with the GFCM Secretariat to achieve efficient market-related measures that can prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing in the region; and
  - d) further collaborate with competent organizations for the purpose of monitoring and analysing existing regional markets and trade flows and the strengthening of legal fish marketing measures.

## **PART VII**

### **Role of the GFCM**

39. The implementation of responsible fishing practices and the prevention, deterrence and elimination of IUU fishing are issues for the whole Mediterranean and Black Sea regions. The GFCM is the competent and relevant RFMO to develop and implement a RPOA-IUU for these regions.

40. The GFCM shall collect all relevant regional fisheries and vessel-related data to assist CPCs in identifying potential instances of IUU fishing in the GFCM area of application and in taking such actions which are consistent with international law in order to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

41. Upon request of CPCs concerned, the GFCM shall support the CPCs through a regional VMS and control system based on a modular approach to monitor the activities of fishing vessels operating in the GFCM area of application. This will include direct support to CPCs in assessing their national control systems with a view to ensuring that they are fully in line with the regional standards adopted by the GFCM.

42. The GFCM shall collaborate with CPCs in the implementation of effective regional market measures that are consistent with international trade law and that will assist in the identification, tracking, validating and promoting of legal fish catches.

43. The GFCM shall monitor the effectiveness of this RPOA-IUU and communicate an annual report on its implementation to the annual session of the Commission and a biennial report on its implementation to the FAO Committee on Fisheries.

44. The GFCM shall facilitate the definition of joint regional and subregional inspection plans on the high seas addressing those species regulated under subregional management plans adopted through GFCM recommendations.

**PART VIII**  
**Developing states**

*Special requirements of developing countries*

45. The parties to this plan are aware that a fully effective RPOA-IUU requires technically competent implementation and operationalization by all CPCs and the GFCM Secretariat. To this end, the capacity of developing states to implement the provisions of this plan will be taken into account by the GFCM and all CPCs in accordance with Article 17 of the GFCM Agreement.

46. All CPCs and the GFCM Secretariat shall give full recognition to the special circumstances and requirements of developing state CPCs. The GFCM Secretariat, as well the CPCs to the extent possible, shall provide developing state CPCs with technical assistance which will allow developing state CPCs to, *inter alia*:

- a) prepare and implement a national legal basis for the implementation of this plan, including the transposition of GFCM recommendations pursuant to Article 14 of the GFCM Agreement;
- b) improve and harmonize the submission to the GFCM Secretariat of the data that are described throughout this plan;
- c) constantly review their compliance with GFCM recommendations in place; and
- d) have full participation in GFCM meetings that are held for the purpose of discussing, developing or implementing this plan.

47. The GFCM Secretariat shall provide developing flag and coastal states with technical assistance in their efforts to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

**PART IX**  
**Final provisions**

*Entry into force*

48. The CPCs shall transpose, to the extent possible, this plan into their national legislation, consistent with Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the GFCM Agreement. Where appropriate, they shall seek the support of the GFCM Secretariat so as to facilitate the transposition of this plan into their national legislation.

**Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/8**  
**on an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside the waters under national jurisdiction in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16)**

*CONSIDERING* that the objective of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of marine living resources in the GFCM area of application;

*RECALLING* that, in giving effect to the objective of the GFCM Agreement, the GFCM shall adopt recommendations on conservation and management measures aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of fishing activities, in order to preserve marine living resources and the economic and social viability of fisheries and that, in adopting such recommendations, the GFCM shall give particular attention to measures to prevent overfishing and minimize discards as well as to the potential impacts on small-scale fisheries and local communities;

*RECALLING* that, in giving effect of the objective of the GFCM Agreement, the GFCM shall foster, as appropriate, a subregional approach to fisheries management and aquaculture development in order to better address the specificities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;

*NOTING* that the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) has recurrently considered that the stocks of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp are in overexploitation in the geographical subareas (GSAs) 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16;

*CONSIDERING* that the status of stocks as assessed by the SAC requires the development and adoption of management measures aimed at ensuring the conservation of demersal stocks in the above GSAs;

*RECALLING* Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/4 establishing a multiannual management plan for the fisheries exploiting European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16);

*RECALLING* that, in accordance with this recommendation “the contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs), through the GFCM, shall establish, before 2018, an observation and inspection programme to ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures contained in this recommendation”;

*CONSIDERING* the results of the dedicated pilot project approved by the CPCs at the eleventh session of the Compliance Committee (CoC) (FAO headquarters, June 2017) and implemented from 15 July to 15 September 2017 by the CPCs with the assistance of the European Fishery Control Agency (EFCA) and the GFCM Secretariat.

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, the following recommendation:

**PART I**  
**Scope and general principles**

1. This recommendation shall establish an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme (hereafter “the scheme”), the scope of which is limited to the provisions of Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/4 that cover inspection and surveillance activities outside the waters under national jurisdiction of GSAs 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 (Strait of Sicily).

2. Each CPC decides to participate to inspections on a voluntary basis. Inspections shall be carried out by inspectors designated by the CPCs. Each CPC shall, no later than 1 December of each year, notify to the GFCM Secretariat the list of the names of inspectors authorized to perform inspection and surveillance in the GFCM area of application. The full list of inspectors shall be published and maintained by the GFCM Secretariat on its secured and password-protected online portal.
3. Inspectors shall carry appropriate identity documentation issued by the authorities of the flag state, which shall follow the template provided in Annex 1.
4. The names of the vessels and aircrafts used for inspection and surveillance shall be notified by participating CPCs to the GFCM Secretariat, by 15 December of the previous year or as soon as possible before the commencement of inspection activities. The GFCM Secretariat shall make available to all CPCs information related to designated inspection vessels and aircrafts, including by posting it on a password-protected online portal.
5. Vessels carrying out boarding and inspection duties in accordance with the scheme shall fly a special flag or pennant, as described in Annex 2, approved by the Commission and issued by the GFCM Secretariat.
6. The GFCM Secretariat shall ensure that the information referred to above is automatically made available to all CPCs.
7. A CPC may, by mutual agreement with another CPC, deploy inspectors it has assigned to the scheme to an inspection platform of this other CPC. It shall notify the GFCM Secretariat in advance of such deployment.
8. Each CPC shall ensure that every inspection platform entitled to fly its flag operating in the GFCM area of application maintains secure contact, in a daily manner where possible, with every other inspection platform operating in the GFCM area of application, to exchange information necessary to coordinate their activities.
9. Each CPC with an inspection presence in the GFCM area of application shall seek to ensure that its inspectors treat vessels operating in the GFCM area of application on an equal footing by avoiding a disproportionate number of inspections on vessels entitled to fly the flag of any other CPC.
10. Each CPC with an inspection or surveillance presence in the GFCM area of application shall provide to each inspection platform, upon its entry into the GFCM area of application, a list of sightings, boardings and inspections it has conducted over the previous ten-day period, including the dates, coordinates and any other relevant information.

## **PART II**

### **Conduct of inspections**

11. Each CPC with an inspection presence shall ensure that its inspectors:
  - a) notify the fishing vessel, prior to boarding, of the name of the inspection vessel;
  - b) display on the inspection vessel and boarding vessel, the pennant described in Annex 2;
  - c) ensure that, during boarding, the inspection vessel remains at a safe distance from fishing vessels;
  - d) do not require the fishing vessel to stop or manoeuvre when towing, shooting or hauling fishing gear; and

- e) limit each inspection team to a maximum of three inspectors.
12. Upon boarding the vessel, inspectors shall produce the identity card as described in Annex 1 to the master of the fishing vessel. Inspections shall be conducted in one of the official languages of the GFCM and, where possible, in the language spoken by the master of the fishing vessel.
13. Inspectors shall conduct inspections in accordance with international regulations, procedures and practices relating to the safety of the vessel being inspected and its crew, shall minimize interference with fishing activities or stowage of products and, to the extent practicable, avoid actions which would adversely affect the quality of the catch on board.
14. Inspectors shall limit their enquiries to ascertaining the observance of Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/4 in relation to the flag state of the vessel concerned. In making the inspection, inspectors may ask the master of the fishing vessel for any assistance they may need. Inspectors shall draw up a report of the inspection using the form contained in Annex 4.
15. Inspectors shall sign the inspection report in the presence of the master of the vessel, who shall sign the report too and shall be entitled to add any observations to it which he or she may think suitable.
16. Copies of the report shall be given to the master of the vessel and to the government of the inspection party, which shall transmit copies to the appropriate authorities of the flag state of the inspected vessel and to the GFCM Secretariat.
17. The size of the inspection party and length of the inspection shall be determined by the commanding officer of the inspection vessel taking into account relevant circumstances. In general the inspection party should complete its tasks in the shortest possible time.

### **PART III Infringements**

18. For the purpose of these procedures, an infringement means the following violations observed under the provisions of Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/4:
- a) fishing without a valid license, permit or authorization issued by the flag CPC;
  - b) failing to maintain sufficient records of catch and catch-related data in accordance with GFCM data reporting requirements, or significantly misreporting such catch and/or catch-related data;
  - c) fishing in a closed area;
  - d) fishing during a closed season;
  - e) using prohibited fishing gear;
  - f) falsifying or intentionally concealing the markings, identity or registration of a fishing vessel;
  - g) concealing, tampering with or disposing of evidence relating to investigation on a violation;
  - h) committing multiple violations which, taken together, constitute a serious disregard of applicable measures;
  - i) obstructing, intimidating, interfering with or otherwise preventing authorised inspectors from performing duties; and

- j) interfering with the satellite monitoring system and/or operating without a vessel monitoring system (VMS).

19. In the case of any boarding and inspection of a fishing vessel during which the inspectors observe an activity or condition that would constitute a violation, as defined above, the authorities of the flag state of the inspection vessel shall immediately notify the flag state of the fishing vessel directly as well as through the GFCM Secretariat. In such situation, the inspector should also inform any inspection ship of the flag state of the fishing vessel known to be in the vicinity.

20. GFCM inspectors shall register the inspections undertaken and infringements detected (if any) in the fishing vessel logbook.

21. The inspected flag state CPC shall ensure that, following the inspection referred to above, the fishing vessel concerned ceases all fishing activities. The flag state CPC shall require the fishing vessel to proceed within 72 hours to a port it has designated, where an investigation shall be initiated.

22. In the case where an inspection has detected an activity or condition that would constitute a violation, the actions and follow-up taken by the flag CPC shall be notified to their national authorities as well as the GFCM Secretariat, to be reviewed by the CoC.

23. Resistance to inspectors or failure to comply with their directions shall be treated by the flag state of the inspected vessel in a manner similar to resistance to a national inspector or failure to comply with his directions.

24. The authorities of CPCs shall consider and act on inspection reports (Annex 4), sighting information sheets (Annex 5) and statements resulting from documentary inspections of foreign inspectors under these arrangements on a similar basis as reports of national inspectors in accordance with their national legislation.

#### **PART IV**

##### **Obligations of the master during inspections**

25. The master of a fishing vessel being inspected shall:

- a) facilitate safe and effective boarding of officials, in accordance with good seamanship, when the appropriate signal of the International Code of Signals is given or when the intention to board is established through radiocommunication by a vessel or helicopter carrying an official;
- b) provide a boarding ladder meeting the requirements of Annex 3 to facilitate safe and convenient access to any vessel which requires a climb of 1,5 metre or more;
- c) facilitate the inspectors' inspection duties, providing assistance when requested and in a reasonable way;
- d) permit inspectors to communicate with the authorities of the flag state, the coastal state and the inspecting state;
- e) alert inspectors to particular safety hazards on board fishing vessels;
- f) provide access by officials to all areas of the vessel, all processed or unprocessed catches, all fishing gear and all relevant information and documents;
- g) facilitate safe disembarkation by inspectors on completion of the inspection;

- h) upon request from the inspector, remove any part of the fishing gear which does not seem to be in compliance with GFCM recommendations in place; and
- i) where the inspector has made any entries in the logbooks, provide the inspector with a copy of each page where such entries appear and, upon request by the inspector, sign each page to confirm that it is a true copy.

**PART V**  
**Final provisions**

26. This recommendation shall be implemented in 2018, in accordance with the capacity of CPCs, and shall be fully implemented by all CPCs concerned in 2019.

27. The CoC shall monitor and report to the Commission on the occasion of its forty-second session, on the implementation of the present scheme. The Commission shall examine any recommendation for improving the implementation of the scheme.

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## Template of identity card for GFCM inspectors

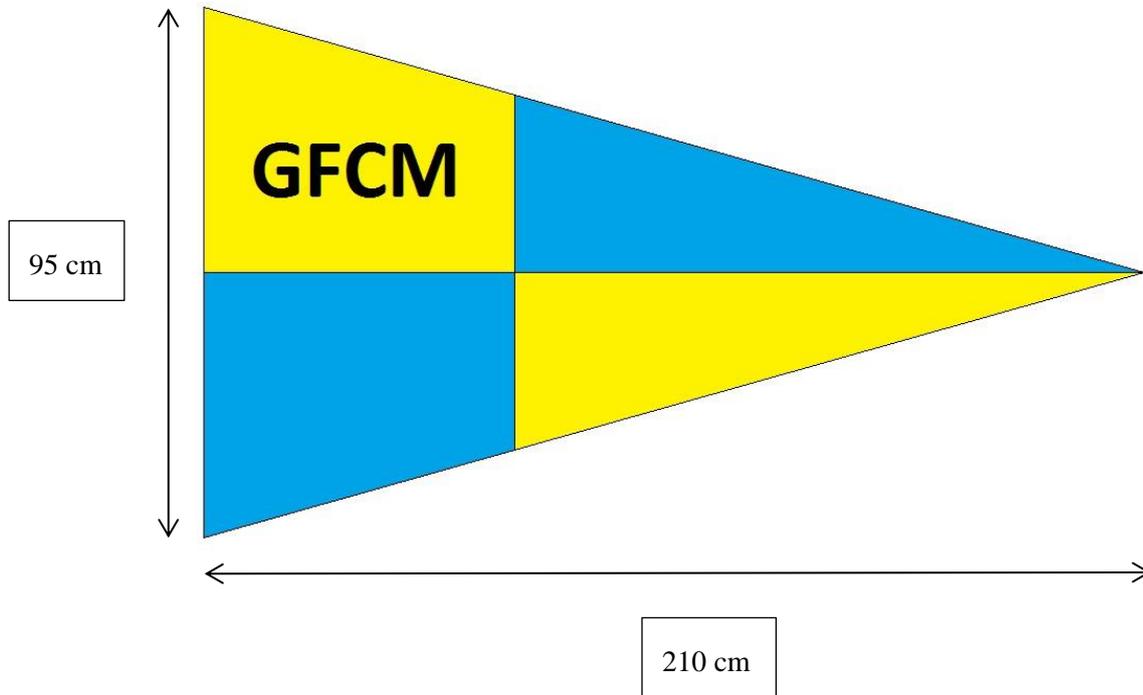
<b>General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)</b>			<b>GFCM</b>	
	<b>GFCM</b>	The holder of this inspector identity card is a GFCM inspector duly appointed under the terms of the GFCM Joint Inspection and Surveillance Scheme and has the power to act under the provisions of GFCM rules.		
<b>INSPECTOR IDENTITY CARD</b>				
Photograph	Contracting party			
	Inspector name:			
	Card n°		.....	
	Issue date:	Valid for five years		

Recto

Verso

*Dimensions: width 10 cm, height 7 cm.*

Model of GFCM inspection pennant



Pennants to be displayed by a GFCM inspection vessel. A boarding vessel shall display one pennant, which may be half-size.

**Construction and use of boarding ladders**

1. The provisions of this annex shall apply to ensure safe and convenient access to fishing vessels which require a climb of 1,5 metre or more.
2. A boarding ladder shall be provided which shall be efficient for the purpose of enabling inspectors to embark and disembark safely at sea. The boarding ladder shall be kept clean and in good order.
3. The ladder shall be positioned and secured so that:
  - a) it is clear of any possible discharges from the vessel;
  - b) it is clear of the finer lines and as far as practicable in the mid-length of the vessel; and
  - c) each step rests firmly against the vessel's side.
4. The steps of the boarding ladder shall:
  - a) be of hardwood or other material of equivalent properties, made in one piece free of knots; the four lowest steps may be made of rubber of sufficient strength and stiffness, or of other suitable material of equivalent characteristics;
  - b) have an efficient non-slip surface;
  - c) be not less than 480 mm long, 115 mm wide, and 23 mm in thickness, excluding any non-slip device or grooving;
  - d) be equally spaced not less than 300 mm or more than 380 mm apart; and
  - e) be secured in such a manner that they will remain horizontal.
5. No boarding ladder shall have more than two replacement steps which are secured in position by a method different from that used in the original construction of the ladder and any steps so secured shall be replaced, as soon as reasonably practicable, by steps secured in position by the method used in the original construction of the ladder. When any replacement step is secured to the side ropes of the boarding ladder by means of grooves in the side of the step, such grooves shall be positioned in the longer sides of the steps.
6. The side ropes of the ladder shall consist of two uncovered manila or equivalent ropes not less than 60 mm in circumference on each side; each rope shall be left uncovered by any other material and be continuous with no joints below the top step; two main ropes, properly secured to the vessel and not less than 65 mm in circumference, and a safety line shall be kept at hand ready for use if required.
7. Battens made of hardwood, or other material of equivalent properties, in one piece, free of knots and between 1,8 and 2 m long, shall be provided at such intervals as will prevent the boarding ladder from twisting. The lowest batten shall be on the fifth step from the bottom of the ladder and the interval between any batten and the next shall not exceed nine steps.
8. Means shall be provided to ensure safe and convenient passage for inspectors embarking on or disembarking from the vessel between the head of the boarding ladder, or of any accommodation ladder

or other appliance provided. Where such passage is by means of a gateway in the rails or bulwark, adequate handholds shall be provided. Where such passage is by means of a bulwark ladder, such ladder shall be securely attached to the bulwark rail or platform and two handhold stanchions shall be fitted at the point of boarding or leaving the vessel not less than 0,70 m or more than 0,80 m apart. Each stanchion shall be rigidly secured to the vessel's structure at or near its base and also at a higher point, shall be not less than 40 mm in diameter, and shall extend not less than 1,20 m above the top of the bulwark.

9. Lighting shall be provided at night so that both the boarding ladder and also the position where the inspector boards the vessel shall be adequately lit. A lifebuoy equipped with a self-illuminating light shall be kept at hand ready for use. A heaving line shall also be kept at hand ready for use if required.

10. Means shall be provided to enable the boarding ladder to be used on either side of the vessel. The inspector in charge may indicate which side he would like the boarding ladder to be deployed.

11. The rigging of the ladder and the embarkation and disembarkation of inspector(s) shall be supervised by a responsible officer of the vessel. The responsible officer shall be in radio contact with the bridge.

12. Where on any vessel constructional features such as rubbing bands would prevent the implementation of any of these provisions, special arrangements shall be made to ensure that inspector(s) are able to embark and disembark safely.

**GFCM inspection report**

**1. INSPECTOR(s)**

Name..... Contracting Party.....GFCM Identity Card number.....

Name..... Contracting Party.....GFCM Identity Card number.....

Name..... Contracting Party.....GFCM Identity Card number.....

**2. VESSEL CARRYING THE INSPECTOR(S)**

2.1 Name and registration .....

2.2 Flag.....

**3. INFORMATION ON VESSEL INSPECTED**

3.1 Name and registration.....

3.2 Flag.....

3.3 Captain (name and address).....

3.4 Ship owner (name and address).....

3.5 GFCM record number.....

3.6 Type of vessel.....

**4. POSITION**

4.1 Position as determined by inspecting vessel’s master at .....UTC; Lat..... Long.....

4.2 Position as determined by fishing vessel’s master at .....UTC; Lat..... Long.....

**5. DATE AND TIMES THE INSPECTION COMMENCED AND FINISHED**

5.1 Date ..... Time arrived on board ..... UTC-Time of Departure .....UTC

**6. TYPE OF FISHING GEAR ON BOARD**

Bottom otter trawl – OTB	
Mid-water otter trawl – OTM	
Shrimp trawls – TBS	
Purse seine – PS	
Gillnets anchored (set) – GNS	
Set longlines – LLS	
Recreational gear – RG	
Other (Specify)	

## **7. MESH MEASUREMENT - IN MILLIMETRES**

7.1 Legal mesh size to be used: .....mm

7.2 Result of the average mesh size measurement: .....mm

7.3 Infringement: YES  – NO  ----- In case of YES, legal reference:

## **8. INSPECTION OF CATCHES ON BOARD**

8.1 Results of the inspection of the fish on board

<b>SPECIES</b> <b>(FAO tri alpha</b> <b>Code)</b>						
<b>Total (Kg)</b>						
<b>Presentation</b>						
<b>Sample inspected</b>						
<b>Percentage of</b> <b>undersize fish</b>						

8.2 Infringement: YES  – NO  ----- In case of YES, legal reference:

## **9. INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS ON BOARD AND VMS**

9.1 Fishing Logbook: YES  – NO

9.2 Infringement: YES  – NO  ----- In case of YES, legal reference:

9.3 Fishing license: YES  – NO

9.4 Infringement: YES  – NO  ----- In case of YES, legal reference:

9.3 Specific authorisation: YES  – NO

9.4 Infringement: YES  – NO  ----- In case of YES, legal reference:

9.5 VMS: YES  – NO  -----in function: YES  - NO

9.6 Infringement: YES  – NO  ----- In case of YES, legal reference:

## **10. LIST OF VIOLATIONS**

- Fishing without a license, permit or authorization issued by the flag CPC – legal reference:
- Failure to maintain sufficient records of catch and catch-related data in accordance with GFCM reporting requirements or significant misreporting of such catch and/or catch-related data – legal reference:
- Fishing in a closed area – legal reference:
- Fishing during a closed season– legal reference:
- Use of prohibited fishing gear – legal reference:
- Falsification or intentional concealment of the markings, identity or registration of a fishing vessel – legal reference:
- Concealment, tampering with or disposing of evidence relating to investigation of a violation – legal reference:

- Multiple violations which taken together constitute a serious disregard of measures in force pursuant to the GFCM
- Assault, resistance, intimidation, sexual harassment, interference with, or undue obstruction or delay of an authorized inspector
- Interference with the satellite monitoring system and/or operates without VMS system – legal reference:

**11. LIST OF DOCUMENTS COPIED ON BOARD**

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

**12. COMMENTS AND SIGNATURE BY THE MASTER OF VESSEL**

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

Signature of master: .....

**13. COMMENTS AND SIGNATURE BY THE INSPECTOR(S)**

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

Signature of inspector (s):  
 .....

**GFCM sighting report**

1. Date of the sightings: ...../...../..... Time:.....UTC
2. Position of the vessel sighted: Latitude..... -  
Longitude.....
3. Course:..... – Speed.....
4. Name of the vessel sighted:
5. Flag of the vessel sighted:
6. External number/markings:
7. Type of vessel:
  - Fishing vessel
  - Carrier vessel
  - Freezer vessel
  - Other (specify)
8. International Radio Call Sign:
9. IMO number (where applicable):
10. Activity(ies):
  - Fishing
  - Steaming
  - Drifting
  - Transshipping
11. Radio contact: YES - NO
12. Name and nationality of the captain of the sighted vessel:  
.....
13. Number of people on board the sighted vessel:  
.....
14. Catches on board sighted vessel:  
.....
15. Information collected by:  
Name of inspector:  
Contracting Party:  
GFCM Identity Card number:  
Name of the patrol vessel:

**Resolution GFCM/41/2017/1**  
**on a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

*RECALLING* that the objective of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of marine living resources in the GFCM area of application;

*RECALLING* the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (New York, September 2015) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources”, SDG 2 “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”, SDG 6 “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, SDG 8 “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”, SDG 12 “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”, SDG 13 “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”, SDG 15 “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss” and SDG 17 “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”.

*RECALLING* that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has launched the Blue Growth Initiative with the aim of addressing food security and poverty alleviation, namely by promoting the production of quality capture and aquaculture fish through integrated and sustainable processes that take into account socio-economic aspects.

*RECALLING* that the FAO has enshrined its quest for securing a productive and sustainable aquaculture to achieve food security in its Strategic Objective 2;

*RECALLING* that, according to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of FAO, states should establish, maintain and develop an appropriate legal and administrative framework which facilitates the development of responsible aquaculture;

*RECALLING* the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention);

*RECALLING* the subregional approach to fisheries management and aquaculture development as enshrined in the GFCM Agreement, with a view to better addressing the specificities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region;

*CONSIDERING* the Task Force established in 2015 in charge of preparing a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture (Aquaculture Task Force), and the extensive consultation process it has launched;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 and 8 of the GFCM Agreement, the following resolution:

1. The GFCM shall establish a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture (the strategy) aimed at supporting the fulfilment of its mandate, as reproduced in Annex.

2. The implementation of the strategy is expected to ensure that, by 2030, the aquaculture sector delivers its full potential.
  3. The strategy is divided into the following three targets, with selected outputs and proposed activities:
    - a) build an efficient regulatory and administrative framework to secure sustainable aquaculture development;
    - b) enhance interactions between aquaculture and the environment while ensuring animal health and welfare; and
    - c) facilitate market-oriented aquaculture and enhance public perception.
  4. The GFCM shall review the contents of the strategy in due course.
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## Strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture

### Executive summary

Aquaculture is a flourishing industry which plays a key role in Mediterranean and Black Sea countries, under a blue growth perspective. According to current trends in aquaculture production and to some national aquaculture strategies, the production of farmed seafood is expected to substantially increase in the region over the next decades. This needs careful planning for the long-term social, economic and environmental sustainability of the sector. At the international level, crucial steps have been made to promote sustainable development and cooperation, in light of emerging global challenges. In particular, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and more specifically SDG 14, underscore the importance of a “sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism”. At the level of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) supports responsible aquaculture practices while the attainment of a productive and sustainable aquaculture is enshrined in FAO Strategic Objective 2 (SO2). In the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the need to promote blue growth and develop sustainable aquaculture to ensure food security has been reiterated on several occasions. Acknowledging this growing trend and in line with its mandate to ensure the sustainable development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) has established, in 2015, a dedicated Task Force in charge of preparing a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture (Aquaculture Task Force). The strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture (the strategy) has been developed as part of an extensive consultation process and building upon the key elements provided by the Aquaculture Task Force. It is aimed at helping countries accomplish their national production plans in order to enable the sector to efficiently reach its potential by 2030. This strategy envisages a future for Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture where a level playing field is achieved and the promotion of the sector is ensured so that it becomes more competitive, sustainable, productive, profitable and equitable. It is structured around three main targets addressing key transboundary vulnerabilities and cross-cutting issues, based on the pillars of sustainable development. These targets will be instrumental in achieving the overarching objective of the strategy through a number of outputs and activities.

#### **Target 1: Build an efficient regulatory and administrative framework to secure sustainable aquaculture development**

**Output 1.1:** Improved aquaculture regulatory frameworks and streamlined public sector management

**Output 1.2:** Integrated aquaculture in coastal zones

#### **Target 2: Enhance interactions between aquaculture and the environment while ensuring animal health and welfare**

**Output 2.1:** Mitigated impacts on the environment and improved environmental protection

**Output 2.2:** Responsible aquatic animal health and welfare management

**Output 2.3:** Enhanced research and knowledge sharing on aquaculture

#### **Target 3: Facilitate market-oriented aquaculture and enhance public perception**

**Output 3.1:** A market-driven aquaculture sector development

**Output 3.2:** Improved safety and quality of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture products

**Output 3.3:** Enhanced aquaculture and aquaculture products marketing and communication

## BACKGROUND

This integrated regional aquaculture strategy is the fruit of an extensive consultation process started after the thirty-ninth session of the GFCM, when it was decided to establish a task force to develop a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture, building in particular on the outcomes of the Regional Conference “Blue Growth in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea: developing sustainable aquaculture for food security” (Italy, December 2014). These outcomes underlined that good governance implies that aquaculture management should be participative, effective, accountable and coherent and be based on sound and effective regulatory frameworks.

The co-construction process launched for the development of the strategy aimed at securing equal terms of competition and discussing minimum common criteria in order to address cross-cutting and transboundary issues in relation to aquaculture in Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries. It involved national focal points and experts, who met on various occasions. The two meetings of the Aquaculture Task Force held so far are the main milestones. The first meeting of the Aquaculture Task Force (Italy, May 2016) reviewed the recent progress made and the priorities for the aquaculture sector in the region, and agreed on preliminary key elements, working areas, practical actions, management tools and a roadmap for the strategy. The outcomes of this first meeting were endorsed by the fortieth session of the GFCM. The second meeting of the Aquaculture Task Force (Italy, November 2016) reviewed existing national and supranational aquaculture strategies and development plans in the region and discussed the structure and contents of the strategy, with particular emphasis on priority actions and technical assistance needs. The meeting agreed on fine-tuning the strategy, in particular its structure, timeframe, cooperation and technical assistance components. A revised version of the strategy was brought to the attention of the tenth session of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) (Turkey, March 2017) which agreed to keep working towards its finalization so that it could be submitted to and adopted by the forty-first session of the GFCM.

The strategy is in line with the strategic areas of the GFCM Aquaculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform (AMShP) and has been enriched with the outcomes of other aquaculture projects carried out so far<sup>1</sup> under the GFCM Framework Programme. It is structured in three parts: i) a general introduction describing the vision, mission, nature, scope and guiding principles of the strategy; ii) a section dedicated to the three targets of the strategy, with their associated outputs and activities; and iii) a section addressing the operationalization of the strategy.

## INTRODUCTION

### **The need for a regional strategy**

In Mediterranean and the Black Sea, aquaculture is an active and growing sector which plays a major role in achieving food security, employment and economic development while reducing the dependence on often overexploited wild stocks. In 2014, the production of Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries reached 2 381 954 tonnes<sup>2</sup>, for an economic value estimated at about USD 6.8 billion. According to some national aquaculture strategies, the production in Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries is expected to exceed 4 600 000 tonnes in 2020–2030.

However, this rapid growth poses challenges for the overall sustainability of the sector in the long term and raises concerns from different points of view. Sustainable aquaculture means ensuring not only that the industry is economically and environmentally sustainable but also that farms operate in a socially and culturally responsible manner. Current challenges in terms of governance, spatial planning, economic and market issues, ecological and environmental concerns as well as the globalization of aquaculture production market have highlighted the need for a regional strategy towards the sustainable development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries.

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<sup>2</sup> Including production from all environments (marine, brackish and freshwater) and from the Atlantic.

In a blue growth perspective, aquaculture constitutes a strategic sector for future development. It holds great potential for many coastal countries and communities in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region. If managed and governed properly, it can provide multiple benefits in terms of nutritious food and positive socio-economic outcomes. Since Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture consists of various culture systems at varying stages of development, a holistic approach is needed to ensure that aquaculture is developed in a way that reconciles all the principles of sustainable development, taking into account the complexity and specificities of aquaculture across the region.

The implementation of this regional aquaculture strategy should help achieve this objective by facilitating cooperative processes and fostering synergies so that the sector delivers its full potential by 2030.

### **Vision and mission**

The strategy envisages a future for Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture where the industry will be globally competitive, sustainable, productive, profitable, and equitable. At the same time, it should help Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries in formulating harmonized aquaculture activities and action plans with particular attention to current regional, subregional, national and local aquaculture priorities and emerging challenges and taking into account existing national and supranational strategies and existing legal requirements.

### **International and institutional context**

The international community recently recognized that, in light of emerging global challenges, further progress needs to be achieved in order to secure an efficient cooperation towards sustainable development. On 1 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – adopted by world leaders at an historic United Nations Summit in September 2015 – officially came into force. The SDGs should mobilize efforts over the next fifteen years towards a more prosperous and sustainable world. The conservation and sustainable use of marine environment have an important role to play in this respect, and this is reflected in particular by SDG 14 which aims to “conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”. Its Target 7, in particular, aims “by 2030, [to] increase the economic benefits to Small Island Developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism”. This target acknowledges the significant role of good governance in aquaculture in the context of comprehensive efforts to improve life conditions, and stresses the need to “balance priorities between growth and conservation, and between industrial and artisanal fisheries and aquaculture, ensuring equitable benefits for communities.” Other SDGs such as SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 12 (Responsible production and consumption), SDG 13 (Climate action), SDG 15 (Life on land) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals), are also important for aquaculture. Back in 2012, “The Future We Want” outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) had already renewed international commitment for sustainable development and cooperation. Along with these efforts, the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) concluded with the historic adoption, in December 2015, of the Paris Agreement. For the first time in history, 174 nations and the European Union (EU) jointly committed to undertake ambitious actions to combat climate change and adapt to its effects, thereby outlining a new course in global climate efforts.

In support of these efforts, the FAO has launched the Blue Growth Initiative with the aim of addressing food security and poverty alleviation by producing quality capture and aquaculture fish through integrated, sustainable, and socio-economically sensitive processes. The FAO has enshrined its quest for securing a productive and sustainable aquaculture to achieve food security in its Strategic Objective 2 (SO2) which is to “make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable”. The FAO programme of work for fisheries and aquaculture under the FAO strategic framework, elaborated

by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI)<sup>3</sup>, highlights that “some of the Blue Growth Initiative activities contributing to SO2 involve cross-sectoral technical work, including [...] reducing the impact of agriculture intensification on aquatic eco-systems, improving aquatic animal health, and promoting coastal zone management”. Furthermore, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) tackles the promotion of responsible aquaculture. In particular, Article 9.1.1 indicates that “states should establish, maintain and develop an appropriate legal and administrative framework which facilitates the development of responsible aquaculture”, while Article 9.2 clearly addresses the protection of transboundary aquatic ecosystems by supporting responsible aquaculture practices and Article 11 puts forward the right of consumers to safe and quality products encouraging states to set minimum standards in this regard and promoting certification.

In the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, other international legal instruments have been adopted and are contributing to these efforts, such as for instance the 1995 Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean.

At the regional level, the need to pursue the sustainability of the aquaculture sector is enshrined in the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement). The Agreement clearly affirms that “responsible aquaculture reduces stress on living marine resources and plays an important role in the promotion and better use of aquatic living resources, including food security”. The development of a regional strategy is fully in line with Article 5 e) of the GFCM Agreement, which states that the GFCM shall “foster, as appropriate, a subregional approach to fisheries management and aquaculture development in order to better address the specificities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea”.

## 1. NATURE AND SCOPE

The strategy is linked to SDG 14 and to SO2. It is multiannual (2017–2020) and provides guidance to unlock the potential of the sector in the region by ensuring that it meets the growing need for aquaculture products and contributes to food security and poverty reduction, with particular attention to coastal communities. Responsibility and sustainability constitute the cornerstones of the strategy, which is also in line with the principles and approaches enshrined in modern international legal instruments governing fisheries and aquaculture.

The strategy does not apply to fisheries since the challenges associated with this sector are specifically addressed in a dedicated mid-term strategy towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries.

The three targets of the strategy address a range of transboundary key vulnerabilities and cross-cutting issues, based on the pillars of sustainable development. For each target, proposed outputs and activities are instrumental towards its efficient achievement.

## 2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The implementation of the strategy will be guided by the following principles, which are enshrined in the GFCM Agreement and in place at the FAO level:

**Sustainability:** the FAO vision for sustainable food and agriculture is “that of a world in which food is nutritious and accessible for everyone and natural resources are managed in a way that maintain ecosystem functions to support current as well as future human needs”. According to this vision, rural communities “have the opportunity to actively participate in, and benefit from, economic development, have decent employment conditions, [...] work in a fair price environment, [...] live in security, and have control over their livelihoods and equitable access to resources [...]”<sup>4</sup>. This is particularly reflected in SO2 and in the GFCM Agreement, which states that the Commission shall consider “aquaculture, including culture-based fisheries, as a means to promote the diversification of income and diet and, in

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<sup>3</sup> FAO. 2016. FAO’S programme of work in fisheries and aquaculture under the FAO Strategic Framework. Thirty-second session of the Committee on Fisheries, Rome, Italy, 11–15 July 2016. Document COFI/2016/9.

<sup>4</sup> FAO. 2014. Building a common vision for sustainable food and agriculture. Principles and approaches.

so doing, ensure that marine living resources are used responsibly, that genetic diversity is conserved and adverse impacts on the environment and local communities are minimized” (Article 5 d)).

Best available knowledge: the implementation of the strategy should be based on the best available knowledge, including on aquaculture trends, ecosystems and marine environment, as well as on relevant information from a variety of sources. Efforts to collect all information available shall be ensured, and standards for ensuring its quality information should be applied whenever practicable and appropriate.

Objectivity and transparency: the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on the status and trends of aquaculture, ecosystems and marine environment should respect confidentiality requirements. Transparency in decision-making processes and related activities should be promoted. Uncertainty associated with information on aquaculture status and trends should be expressed, without detracting from the application of the precautionary approach in accordance with the 1995 United Nations (UN) Fish Stocks Agreement and the CCRF when data and information are incomplete.

Timeliness: the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on the status and trends of aquaculture, ecosystems and marine environment should be ensured as timely as possible.

Participation and cooperation: cooperation among relevant stakeholders and existing structures and mechanisms should be promoted in order to create synergies and avoid duplications of existing knowledge and initiatives. The implementation of the strategy should follow the same participatory and consultative approach process applied in the preparation phase. Relevant participants in the process may include, *inter alia*, representatives of Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian states, as well as international, non-governmental and civil society organizations.

Adaptability and level playing field: activities should be adaptive enough to permit adjustments, as necessary, and take into account the different stages of maturity in the sector as well as the different legal frameworks in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region. In this respect, the capacity of developing states in the region should be duly taken into account during the implementation and a level playing field should be sought in order to guarantee parity, impartiality and equal opportunities to all parties involved.

### **3. TARGETS, OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES**

#### **TARGET 1: BUILD AN EFFICIENT REGULATORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK TO SECURE SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT**

The international community has acknowledged on several occasions that good governance in aquaculture would contribute to increase the social acceptability of the sector and improve confidence of stakeholders, hence unlocking its socio-economic potential and enabling the various actors to benefit from new development opportunities.

It is widely recognized that, in Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries, the main challenges for aquaculture development are: the lack of streamlined administrative management and of dedicated regulatory frameworks accounting specifically for coordinated spatial planning and enabling the selection of suitable areas for aquaculture (e.g. implementation of allocated zones for aquaculture [AZAs]), the overlapping of numerous legislations and authorities, insufficient long-term planning strategies and the lack of participatory and transparent decision-making processes. These bottlenecks result in excessive bureaucracy, scarce coordination among authorities, lengthy and cumbersome authorization and leasing processes, conflicts over competing uses, misallocation of resources, stagnation of the industry and irreversible environmental damage in transboundary aquatic ecosystems.

In light of this, improvements need to be made in order to build efficient regulatory and administrative frameworks to secure the sustainability of aquaculture growth and better integrate aquaculture into coastal zones. Hence, in the context of its Target 1, the strategy aims at ensuring that aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea is: a) regulated by a sound and functioning system and by the implementation of specific regulations governing the sector, in line with the principles of the CCRF and with the support of strategic plans; b) based on the existence of functioning and transparent participatory mechanisms in decision-making processes; and c) developed in a consistent way based on maritime and

coastal spatial planning principles and integrated with the activities of other coastal users. In order to advance towards good aquaculture governance in the region, the strategy aims at supporting Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries in achieving enabling conditions, such as: improved and dedicated regulatory frameworks, streamlined administrative and public sector management, and participatory, transparent and accountable policy-making processes (Output 1.1); improved and sustainable integration of aquaculture in coastal and marine zones and enhanced compatibility of the sector with other existing and future human activities (Output 1.2).

### **Output 1.1: Improved aquaculture regulatory frameworks and streamlined public sector management**

Recent data<sup>5</sup> suggest that the main challenges for good aquaculture governance in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea are related to the lack of comprehensive regulatory frameworks, clear leadership structures and space allocated to aquaculture.

Legal frameworks often do not encompass a comprehensive vision of aquaculture activities nor do they consider the specificities connected with the location of aquaculture activities (land, offshore, inshore), the type of production (intensive, extensive) or the type of enterprises (small, medium or large scale). This is also reflected in the difficulty experienced by managers in the administration in applying aquaculture regulations themselves. According to recent surveys in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region, 62 percent of the countries apply a national development plan dedicated to aquaculture, while only 25 percent have specific regulations on aquaculture. In countries where no specific regulations on aquaculture exist, aquaculture is regulated by laws on fisheries or agriculture that are not designed to meet the specific needs of the sector<sup>6</sup>.

According to the Strategic Guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture (2013), the licensing time for aquaculture farms exceeds 17 months in the majority of EU countries, while in some countries licenses for aquaculture activities at sea have a limited duration (less than 10 years). Furthermore, the time needed to build facilities and begin the production is often quite long (2.5–3.5 years) before the first sale. Finally, only a limited number of countries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea have functioning participatory fora such as multi-stakeholder platforms or equivalent mechanisms (mirror platforms, aquaculture committees, etc.) enabling dialogue and having a participatory role in decision-making processes.

This output will require the execution of the following activities:

#### Activities to support the improvement of regulatory frameworks and enhance administrative efficiency

- a) Preparation of **regional guidelines for sound regulatory systems**, including guiding principles, good practices and key elements for a sustainable growth of the aquaculture sector (e.g. specific laws and measures on social rights and fair working conditions). This activity is expected to provide Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries with minimal basic requirements for governance-related issues, such as licensing, spatial planning, and competitiveness and ensure a level playing field.
- b) Compilation of **successful practices on licensing processes simplification at the regional and global level** in order to carry out a benchmarking of models and options for good governance. This activity will offer the necessary support and practical solutions to help Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries improve their administrative procedures.
- c) Organization of **training and national capacity building programmes** for operators and decision-makers, at the local and regional level. This activity will enhance the role of aquaculture in national and regional development plans (e.g. human health, local and national

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<sup>5</sup> Chapela, R. 2016. Review of current approaches to spatial planning for aquaculture in marine and freshwater environments in Europe, non-EU Mediterranean and Black Sea countries. Report prepared for the EU funded project AquaSpace – Ecosystem Approach to making Space for Sustainable Aquaculture (<http://www.aquaspace-h2020.eu/>).

<sup>6</sup> Chapela, 2016.

economy) and raise awareness on good governance systems and procedures in aquaculture. Workshops may be also organized to improve interinstitutional cooperation.

- d) **Monitoring progress of aquaculture development** in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea area. This activity is aimed at monitoring the implementation of sustainable aquaculture development according to the sustainability indicators so far identified by the CAQ as well as within the InDAM project<sup>7</sup>.
- e) Establishment of a **regional network (or/and forum/workshop) on aquaculture governance** among Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries and partner organizations in order to address regulatory issues in a coordinated manner and to share experience and knowledge. This activity is expected to provide an enabling environment for cooperation among key decision-makers on aquaculture-related issues with a view to strengthening efforts towards a regional harmonization of regulations.

#### Activities to enhance accountability of policy-making and implementation processes

- f) Preparation of **guidelines to enhance the involvement of aquaculture farmers' organizations (AFOs) in aquaculture management**. These guidelines will include provisions aimed at strengthening stakeholder participation mechanisms in decision-making processes so to ensure proactive inputs and enhanced accountability of the actors involved.
- g) **Support to the establishment of national and regional participatory tools** such as multi-stakeholder platforms. These participatory tools are expected to foster a strong regional network involving national aquaculture experts, partners and research organizations, to stimulate dialogue, and to facilitate knowledge sharing at different geographic levels in order to provide regional solutions to the main gaps and priorities identified at the national level.

#### **Output 1.2: Integrated aquaculture in coastal zones**

The spatial development of marine aquaculture should be considered within the broader context of marine spatial planning in order to minimize the negative impacts on coastal areas, avoid competition with other users and conserve ecosystem services provided by the environment. In the Mediterranean and Black Sea region, the lack of sound spatial planning seriously hinders aquaculture development. At the local level, the major source of conflicts stems from the struggle over marine space and from competing coastal utilizations and users; as a result, the available space for new mariculture development in coastal zones is being seriously limited. Conflicts usually reported by Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries relate to interactions with tourism, local communities, environmental conservation, small-scale fisheries as well as oil and gas industry<sup>8</sup>.

The need for marine spatial planning has been acknowledged by the international community on several occasions. The COFI<sup>9</sup> also emphasised the crucial importance of marine spatial planning to ensure the allocation of space for aquaculture and integrate aquaculture activities within other coastal uses in a concerted manner. At the GFCM level, Resolution GFCM/36/2012/1 on Guidelines on Allocated Zones for Aquaculture, adopted in 2012, highlights that aquaculture development along coastal areas goes beyond the zoning concept and that marine spatial planning, environmental impact assessment and monitoring programmes are essential for the implementation of a regional strategy addressing AZAs. The resolution considers that the implementation of AZAs is a priority for the responsible development and management of aquaculture activities in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. It also includes social and economic provisions aimed at reducing negative aquaculture externalities while allowing a harmonious development of various types of activities in the same area. Moreover, it stresses that the

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<sup>7</sup> Project on “Indicators for Sustainable Development of Aquaculture and Guidelines for their use in the Mediterranean”.

<sup>8</sup> Chapela, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> FAO Committee on Fisheries. 2014. Report of the seventh session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. St Petersburg, Russian Federation, 7–11 October 2013. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report. No. 1064. Rome, FAO. 53 pp.

implementation of AZAs should usually be accompanied by a management plan in which aquaculture is developed.

In the region, countries are considering to frame aquaculture activities in the context of marine spatial planning, especially for the spatial and temporal allocation of maritime space to different activities with a view to preserving the ecological services provided by ocean ecosystems. For example, at the EU level, the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive<sup>10</sup> sets overarching principles and common requirements for human activities in the EU maritime space in order to achieve environmental, economic and social objectives. The directive requires the implementation of maritime spatial planning in all EU waters and the establishment by EU Member States of cross-sectoral maritime spatial plans by 2021. All activities foreseen in the strategy are in line with existing international, regional, supranational and national spatial planning processes.

From a recent survey carried out in 21 Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries, it emerged that 14 countries have implemented site selection for aquaculture development. However, several barriers (conflict for space, environmental concerns, aquaculture priorities not accounted for, etc.) are still limiting the establishment of AZAs. Moreover, it is worth underlining that site selection *per se* does not imply the establishment of AZAs nor the planning and creation of zones that are specifically dedicated to aquaculture. The respondents to the survey also indicated that only 8 countries had established AZAs or aquaculture management areas. Therefore, there is a need to promote the implementation of these tools in order to enhance the integration of aquaculture in coastal zones<sup>11</sup>.

This output will require the execution of the following activities:

- a) **Implementation of technical cooperation projects and mechanisms to support the effective implementation of AZAs** in the region. This activity will include capacity-building and training to support Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries in achieving an effective implementation of AZAs and to facilitate proactive planning (based on Resolution GFCM/36/2012/1). Upon request, this activity could be tailored to specific requirements, as appropriate and should be integrated in the broader EU marine spatial planning process.
- b) **Preparation and dissemination of an AZA toolkit.** The AZA toolkit will illustrate the benefits of AZAs and provide information on their implementation and management in order to maximize existing scientific knowledge on AZAs in the region. It will be based on existing technical achievements and knowledge outputs and tailored to the specificities of the region. The toolkit will include a guide as well as informative materials such as graphics, summary sheets, short leaflets and a training handbook for public managers.

## **TARGET 2: ENHANCE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN AQUACULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT WHILE ENSURING ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE**

The need to enhance interactions between aquaculture and the environment has been highlighted in several international and regional fora. The 2012 Rio+20 Conference has acknowledged that healthy sea ecosystems are more productive and are essential for sustainable sea-based economies. In light of this, the 2016 COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture suggested that the FAO Blue Growth Initiative should not only focus on strategies aimed at reducing the negative impacts of aquaculture, but also contribute to maximizing positive effects of aquaculture, such as those of shellfish farming, on the environment<sup>12</sup>. At the regional level, the GFCM has recognized the importance of striking a balance between minimizing effects on the environment and supporting a growing aquaculture production in coastal zones.

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<sup>10</sup> Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning.

<sup>11</sup> Chapela, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> FAO. 2016. Decisions and recommendations of the eighth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, Brasilia, Brazil, 5–9 October 2015. Thirty-second Session of the Committee on Fisheries, Rome, Italy, 11-15 July 2016. Document COFI/2016/4.

The Mediterranean and the Black Sea share a unique aquatic ecosystem and are characterized by complex aquaculture-environment interactions. Aquaculture impacts on the environment at the local scale could negatively influence ecological services provided by the environment and have an effect at wider scales. In this regard, the lack of regional cooperation in addressing transboundary issues and the poor harmonization of norms and standards increase the difficulty to monitor such interactions. Other factors contribute to hampering these efforts: the lack of applied and harmonized environmental monitoring programme (EMP) dedicated to aquaculture, little capacity in and application of risk analysis, scarce guidelines on control and prevention (diseases, alien species, escapees, climate change and ocean acidification stressors), the lack of applied standards for prevention and control of contaminant procedures along the value chain, and poor harmonized regulatory and monitoring frameworks.

In light of this, efforts need to be made to enhance interactions between aquaculture and the environment while ensuring animal health and welfare. In the context of Target 2, the strategy aims at ensuring that aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea is: a) fully integrated into an environment where the ecological services provided are preserved; b) able to secure adequate health and welfare to farmed aquatic animal; and c) supported by a thriving cooperative research and technological development (RTD) based on industry needs, the results of which are efficiently transferred to farmers. In order to progress towards enhanced interactions between aquaculture and the environment and ensure animal health and welfare, the strategy aims at supporting Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries in mitigating impacts on and improving protection of the environment. This should be attained through actions promoting: traditional and smart aquaculture activities (Output 2.1); a more efficient management of production activities and improved aquatic animal health and welfare (Output 2.2); enhanced research and knowledge sharing in support of sustainable aquaculture development (Output 2.3).

#### **Output 2.1: mitigated impacts on the environment and improved environmental protection**

Aquaculture relies on clean and healthy marine waters. Therefore, the implementation of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) prior to the establishment of aquaculture operations is critical to address environmental impacts before they occur; moreover, monitoring the environment surrounding farming facilities at sea is essential to evaluate the effects and impacts on the environment and on aquaculture itself. In line with Resolution GFCM/36/2012/1, an allowable zone of effect of aquaculture activities should be defined in the close vicinity of each farm and accompanied by an EMP. Based on this need, the GFCM has developed guidelines on EMP for marine finfish cage farming. The recent findings of a survey carried out within the SHoCMed project<sup>13</sup> have highlighted that in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, 8 out of 12 respondent countries – representing 80 percent of the riparian countries which practice cage culture at sea – do not have a permanent environmental monitoring system. These findings also showed that, when an environmental monitoring system exists, there is a lack of cooperation with farmers in monitoring activities. In many cases, environmental monitoring data exist but they are not accessible due to a lack of cooperation among the different institutions and farms.

Another recent study carried out at the European level<sup>14</sup> has reported that escapee accidents are also relatively frequent – in six countries where 242 incidents were reported, three of which were bordering the Mediterranean, approximately 8.9 million fish escaped. This situation is mainly due to scarce preventive measures undertaken at the farm level and entails risks of spreading pathologies and biosecurity threats. Strict procedures should be in place to regulate the introduction of alien species and

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<sup>13</sup> Result from the survey on the “Implementation feasibility at the national level of the guidelines on a harmonized environmental monitoring programme (EMP) for marine finfish cage farming in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea” (SHoCMed project).

<sup>14</sup> Jackson, D., Drumm, A., McEvoy, S., Jensen, Ø., Mendiola, D., Gabiña, G., Borg, J.A., Papageorgiou, N., Karakassis, I., Black, K.D. (2015) A pan-European valuation of the extent, causes and cost of escape events from sea cage fish farming. *Aquaculture*. (436):21–26.

other locally absent species. At the EU level, a Council Regulation on alien species in aquaculture<sup>15</sup> establishes a framework governing aquaculture practices in relation to alien and non-indigenous species [NIS] in order to assess and minimize the possible impacts of those species and of associated non-target species on aquatic habitats. The strategy also takes into account this EU context. At the farm level, the implementation of well-designed best management practices can support producers in their efforts to reduce or mitigate impacts on the environment, increase efficiency and productivity, improve food safety and quality of farm products, maximize the social benefits from aquaculture farming and improve its social acceptability and sustainability.

This output will require the execution of the following activities:

- a) Preparation of **guidelines on risk analysis methods and data recording**. These guidelines will highlight the importance of monitoring and collecting data on specific aspects of aquaculture activities. Environmental issues that are usually not subject to monitoring and recording could also be taken into consideration (e.g. on alien and NIS, escapees, pathogens, drugs and feeds, etc.).
- b) Provision of **training and technical assistance on the implementation of EMP**. This activity aims at fostering national capacity-building on the implementation of EMP within AZAs and at increasing awareness on the practical use of management and monitoring tools.
- c) **Production and dissemination of a toolkit for the harmonization of minimum common criteria** on allowable zones of effects and environmental quality standards. This toolkit will complement and update existing standards and requirements for environmental monitoring produced by the CAQ, taking into consideration climate change and related phenomena which could represent threats to aquaculture.
- d) Implementation of **plans oriented to “climate-smart aquaculture activities”**. This activity aims at supporting aquaculture activities that have a positive effect on global warming, contributing to the preservation of ecological services provided by the environment and maximizing the positive effects of aquaculture on the environment. It could leverage on initiatives implemented at the local, national and regional level – such as extensive aquaculture in lagoon areas, marine protected areas and mussel culture – that take into consideration carbon footprint and sustainable models for bioremediation with a view to securing carbon sequestration and preserving the environment.
- e) **Preparation of guidelines on the promotion of aquaculture best management practices**. This activity aims at increasing awareness and responsibility among farmers on the conservation of environmental integrity. Best management practices will focus on minimum standards related to the farming of the main reared species, including stocking density, feed management, water quality and monitoring, harvest calendar, drugs management, disease and implementation of surveillance plans.

## **Output 2.2: responsible aquatic animal health and welfare management**

Concerns have been recently expressed on antibiotic and antimicrobial resistance, and this worldwide issue calls for the responsible use of successful treatments and for the prevention of diseases. The urgent need to address aquatic animal health and welfare management is contemplated in SO2 which sets the improvement of aquatic animal health as a priority for 2016–2017 and beyond. At the international level, the FAO Codex Alimentarius and the World Health Organization (WHO) specifically address health issues based on the principle that animals and crops must be healthy throughout the entire food chain. In addition, the Aquatic Animal Health Code of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) provides important highlights, in particular on infections.

In this context, the goal is to harmonize actions aiming at tackling the challenges related to aquatic animal health and welfare following an approach that takes into account existing specificities of aquaculture in the region. Managing the health and welfare of farmed fish, including disease prevention

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<sup>15</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 708/2007 of 11 June 2007 concerning use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture.

and the responsible use of veterinary medicines, biological products and chemicals, depends on the overall management of the farm. Good farm management should ensure fish health while maintaining food safety and food quality and minimizing potential impacts on human health and the environment.

This output will require the execution of the following activities:

- a) Provision of **capacity-building for aquaculture farmers** in the field of risk analysis (including risk assessment, management and communication), adaptive management, diagnosis, biosecurity measures, sanitary and food security (responsible use of registered, recorded and traceable medicaments and vaccines). This activity will improve the capacities of farmers to tackle disease prevention and the potential risks and hazards posed by farming operations.
- b) Development of **systems and protocols for the early diagnosis of pathogens** with the support of certified, equipped and competent laboratories. This activity will strengthen the capacity to contain the spread of diseases.

### **Output 2.3: Enhanced research and knowledge sharing on aquaculture**

The COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture has recently acknowledged the important role of education and research on aquaculture as well as their potential contribution to the development of sustainable aquaculture<sup>16</sup>. RTD plays a key role since it brings innovation, fosters rapid technological advance and is a crucial aspect of competitiveness for farmers and the industry as a whole.

In the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, research is well developed, as highlighted by the AquaMed project<sup>17</sup> which has been carried out in 12 Mediterranean riparian countries. The findings of this project indicate that, in 2013, there were 115 research institutes and 1 155 researchers involved in aquaculture research and that 547 aquaculture research projects had been implemented from 2005 to 2010. To be effective, the selection of research topics should be based on the actual needs of the sector and outputs should be transferred to the industry. Moreover, dialogue between the industry (in particular small-scale farms with limited funding resources) and the research community should be improved. Efficient networks should be established and research cooperation should be facilitated to strengthen dialogue between stakeholders, enhance synergies and achieve a better coordination on research activities so as to avoid duplication or fragmentation.

The Mediterranean and the Black Sea is considered as an area that is vulnerable to climate change; this entails likely changes in temperature, eutrophication, harmful algae blooms, water stress, sea level rise, acidification and diseases. These threats could have an impact on the aquaculture sector, especially for shellfish farming; specific science-based information is therefore necessary to evaluate the degree of vulnerability to climate change as well as associated phenomena, taking into account locations, production segments, farming systems and cultured species, with a view to identifying suitable adaptation and mitigation measures.

As the principal objective of aquaculture is to produce food for human consumption, nutritional aspects are considered essential for the promotion and evolution of the sector. In this regard, cooperation with researchers and experts on human nutrition should be reinforced to promote the benefits of aquaculture products in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

This output will require the execution of the following activities:

- a) **Preparation of a research work plan to strengthen aquaculture-driven research and technical development.** This plan should foster the establishment of pilot demonstrative centres in the region, showcasing different production methods in aquaculture for the attention of potential investors, as well as cooperative research and knowledge sharing on cross-cutting and transboundary issues. It should also include a programme to transfer the results of applied research supporting the use of RTD patents and research performance assessment. The selection

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<sup>16</sup> FAO Committee on Fisheries. 2014. Report of the seventh session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. St Petersburg, Russian Federation, 7–11 October 2013. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report. No. 1064. Rome, FAO. 53 pp.

<sup>17</sup> [www.aquamedproject.net](http://www.aquamedproject.net)

of research priorities should be based on end-user needs as well as on strategic research and innovation priorities (for example, epidemiology of aquatic animal pathologies, vaccines, feed technologies, good practices in restocking, efficient water resources use and maintenance of water quality, integrated multitrophic aquaculture, recirculating aquaculture, etc.).

- b) Provision of **technical assistance and cooperation to implement innovative farming technology** (such as recirculation systems, integrated systems of aquaculture production and processing). This activity will ensure that applied research results are regularly transferred to farmers.
- c) Organization of a **workshop on challenges posed by climate change and ocean acidification to Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture**. This activity is aimed at taking stock of new challenges brought about by climate change and ocean acidification, based on the current body of knowledge and ongoing projects, and at discussing best practices to integrate climate change adaptation, mitigation and innovative options into aquaculture activities which could be adjusted to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.
- d) Implementation of a **regional research to assess the vulnerability of aquaculture to climate change and to map risks** and associated phenomena, including ocean acidification. This should enable to identify context-specific adaptation and mitigation measures and implement a regional monitoring system.
- e) Set-up of a **database of aquaculture experts** to be made available to public administrations and aquaculture farmers.

### **TARGET 3: FACILITATE MARKET-ORIENTED AQUACULTURE AND ENHANCE PUBLIC PERCEPTION**

Market-oriented production strategies are key to secure a sound, attractive and fair market for aquaculture products and to build a positive image of aquaculture and its products in the region. This would help enhance the competitiveness of the industry and capitalize on the increasing demand for high quality and value-added seafood products.

However, in Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries, aquaculture remains a highly fragmented sector with uneven negotiation power along the value chain as the retail sector seems to benefit from a disproportionate share of the value created. Producers still lack the ability to proactively face to emerging market challenges and respond to government regulatory initiatives due to the absence of coordinated marketing strategies and promotional initiatives and to scarce collective actions and cooperation in production. In addition, there is a general lack of market data collection and dissemination for production planning, marketing plans and supply-demand forecasts. Mediterranean and Black Sea industries also suffer from competition within domestic and global markets. Finally, there is insufficient awareness in the industry and its related sectors on corporate social responsibility<sup>18</sup>.

In light of this situation, actions are needed to improve food safety and quality, marketing strategies for aquaculture products, and public perception of aquaculture. Hence, in the context of Target 3, the strategy aims at ensuring that aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea is: a) a flourishing industry based on a level playing field and producing safe and healthy food products sold to informed consumers; b) a market-oriented sector based on well-structured market data as well as efficient dissemination tools; and c) integrated into modern supply chains and supported by efficient AFOs through advocacy, technical and economic services. In order to help the aquaculture sector gain a strong foothold on national and global markets and to enhance public perception, the strategy aims at supporting Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries in achieving: a market-driven aquaculture sector (Output 3.1), improved safety and quality of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture products

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<sup>18</sup> Regional Aquaculture Conference (Italy, December 2014); regional FAO/Eurofish/GFCM workshop on Predicting the market for seabass and seabream (Turkey, November 2014.); GFCM CAQ Working Group on Marketing of Aquaculture Products Technical meeting on marketing (Morocco, October 2009) and MedAquaMarket project “Development of a strategy for marketing and promotion of Mediterranean aquaculture”, 2010.

(Output 3.2), and enhanced marketing and communication capacity to promote aquaculture and aquaculture products (Output 3.3).

### **Output 3.1: A market-driven aquaculture sector development**

The Mediterranean and Black Sea region is characterized by a predominance of small-scale producers. According to a survey carried out by the GFCM in 2007<sup>19</sup>, there were approximately 575 fish farms producing European seabass and gilthead seabream in the Mediterranean, 82 percent of which produced less than 500 tonnes per year. In 2015, it was estimated that about 1 000 shellfish farms (mussels and oyster) existed in the region and generally produced less than 50 tonnes per year per farm<sup>20</sup>. This situation is that of a family-based and labour-intensive aquaculture farming, with a majority of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs), mostly family owned. The characteristics and trends of the industry differ between finfish (generally large-scale, moving towards a capital-intensive and vertically-integrated structure, generally producing more than 1 000 tonnes per year and up to 5 000 tonnes in some cases) and shellfish enterprises (generally small or medium-scale, often family-run and labour-intensive, with small volumes of product concentrations obliging farmers to market their products through middlemen, which results in low profit margins).

The fragmentation of primary production has traditionally contributed to a decreasing bargaining power of farmers in the supply chain. As a response to this, small-scale producers have established AFOs, which can play a key role in facilitating the integration of SMEs into modern supply chains. Capitalizing on the industry and market opportunities could easily translate into efficiency gains and this would in turn multiply positive socio-economic returns in the region.

This output will require the execution of the following activities:

#### Activities to respond to market requirements shifting from a production-oriented to a market-oriented approach

- a) **Enhancement of national and regional aquaculture data collection and statistical systems.**  
This activity foresees a regular assessment of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture production, trade and general market data. It will leverage on the current information system for the promotion of aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM) in place at the GFCM and address the socio-economic implications of aquaculture. It is expected to be carried out in cooperation with relevant AFOs, national aquaculture multi-stakeholder platforms and GFCM partner organizations such as Eurofish and Infosamak. Cooperation will be also sought with national and supranational institutions involved in aquaculture and market data collection (e.g. EUMOFA).
- b) **Organization of training and capacity-building for aquaculture farmers on market requirements and innovation in shellfish and finfish aquaculture** in order to increase competitiveness, especially in the case of SMEs. Topics may include financial management, production planning, credit access, aquaculture insurance, aquaculture market and trends monitoring, appropriate logistics and packaging practices, food safety and quality, certification and traceability, species diversification and product differentiation, added value and processed products, integration of aquaculture with other business activities such as tourism, restaurant industry, non-food aquaculture activities and blue biotechnologies).

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<sup>19</sup> Barazi-Yeroulanos, L. 2010. Synthesis of Mediterranean marine finfish aquaculture – a marketing and promotion strategy. Studies and Reviews. General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. No. 88 Rome, FAO. 198p.

<sup>20</sup> Report of the expert meeting on sustainable shellfish aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (Cattolica, Italy, 23–25 November 2015).

(<https://gfcmlib.sharepoint.com/CAO/Report/2015/InDAM/1/Cattolica%20shellfish-FinalReport.pdf>)

### Activities to enhance the role of aquaculture farmers' organizations and multi-stakeholder platforms in marketing and promotion

- c) Organization of **cooperative pilot actions with aquaculture farmers and AFOs at the national level** for the implementation of concerted activities (collection and dissemination of market data and information, provision of technical assistance, technology transfer and training, promotion sales, etc.). The results of this activity as well as the information from the CAQ preliminary survey on AFOs<sup>21</sup> are expected to be widely disseminated with a view to enhancing the visibility of AFOs.
- d) Facilitation of **the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms at the national level** to foster dialogue and cooperation.

### **Output 3.2: Improved safety and quality of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture products**

Consumers are now devoting more attention to seafood safety, quality, freshness and traceability. While compliance with standards on food safety and hygiene and an adequate monitoring would help minimize the risk of food-borne health hazards, certification and traceability could serve as mechanisms for food quality assurance, contribute to consumer-responsive aquaculture production in order to meet the growing demand for sustainable and high quality aquaculture commodities.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission has developed harmonized international food standards to protect consumer health, and Codex Alimentarius documents often serve as a basis for country-specific laws and regulations drafted by national food control agencies.

Certification in aquaculture could be considered as a market-based tool to reduce negative impacts while increasing social acceptability and consumer confidence in aquaculture and aquaculture products. The 2011 FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification<sup>22</sup> provide minimum criteria for developing aquaculture certification standards (animal health and welfare, food safety, environmental integrity, and socio-economic aspects). One of the principles underpinning the guidelines is that a certification scheme “should include adequate procedures for maintaining chain of custody and traceability of certified aquaculture products and processes”, which highlights the fact that certification and traceability are strictly intertwined.

In aquaculture, traceability should take into account all stages of the production process: source of feed, use of vaccines and medicines, production environment, source of eggs and seed, transportation of goods and products, treatment and labelling of final products ready for sale.

Several private aquaculture certification schemes exist; however, the fifteenth session of the FAO Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (Morocco, February 2016) noted that they could become potential trade barriers, and called upon the FAO to pursue efforts within the Codex Alimentarius and continue cooperating within the framework of the World Trade Organization Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement to ensure that a distinction is made between mandatory and voluntary standards.

This output will require the execution the following activities:

- a) Preparation and dissemination of **guidelines and technical protocols on seafood safety** for Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture products. This activity will take into account existing international standards to ensure compliance with responsible aquaculture practices and food safety.
- b) Provision of **technical assistance to countries on compliance with international standards**. This activity aims at improving national legal frameworks related to aquaculture food products safety and hygiene, in line with the Codex Alimentarius and WTO principles.

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<sup>21</sup> Preliminary survey completed by the CAQ in May 2013 to understand the current status, structure and function of these organizations.

<sup>22</sup> FAO. 2011. Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification. Rome, FAO. 122 pp.

- c) Provision of **technical assistance to countries** on food quality, aquaculture certification and traceability, in line with the Codex Alimentarius and the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification.

### **Output 3.3: Enhanced aquaculture and aquaculture products marketing and communication**

Marketing initiatives are strictly connected to the public perception of aquaculture and aquaculture products, which depends on many factors, including personal experience, preconceived ideas, and demographic and regional contexts<sup>23</sup>. Over the last decade, important efforts have been made in the region to educate consumers and enact new legislation that contributes to improve public opinion on aquaculture products<sup>24</sup>. Building a positive image of aquaculture is key to the social acceptability of the sector, which is in turn closely linked to social responsibility.

Marketing strategies should be supported at the national and regional levels to promote Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture and aquaculture products, both in the region and worldwide. Coordinated marketing efforts would enhance consumer knowledge and improve the image of farmed products, thus fostering increased consumer demand. To achieve corporate social responsibility, aquaculture production should comply with existing standards and reflect a high level of social accountability; at the same time, socially responsible practices should be effectively communicated to consumers.

This output will require the execution of the following activities:

#### Activities to develop a marketing and communication strategy to promote Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture and aquaculture products

- a) Development of **regional communication and marketing initiatives**. This activity will possibly envisage collaboration within business-to-business segments (producers, traders, retailers, organizations and media) through joint marketing or cooperation initiatives between industry and the largest retailers. Promotional campaigns targeting the general public, especially younger generations, could also be foreseen, together with the production of promotional material leveraging on the attractive attributes of the region and highlighting the nutritional and healthy characteristics of aquaculture products, as well as aquaculture positive externalities. Such campaigns would need to be preceded by a market analysis to ensure that the messages and target groups are correctly identified.
- b) Provision of **technical assistance on developing and implementing national communication and marketing plans**. This activity will contribute to boost domestic consumption of aquaculture products in Mediterranean and Black Sea countries. It will include joint promotion campaigns, training of relevant stakeholders and their participation in national and regional initiatives.

#### Activities to promote aquaculture corporate social responsibility

- c) Organization of **training and national capacity-building on aquaculture corporate social responsibility** and social risk management for farmers and decision-makers. This activity will contribute to promoting health and welfare schemes as well as safe working environment, in line with the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and related guidance.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION AND WAY FORWARD**

The implementation of the strategy is intended to be part of a process that is consistent with national and supranational aquaculture strategies in Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries. The work plan of the CAQ will be aligned to the targets and expected outputs of the strategy.

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<sup>23</sup> Bacher, K. 2015. Perceptions and misconceptions of aquaculture: A global overview. GLOBEFISH Research Programme, Vol. 120, Rome, FAO. 35 pp.

<sup>24</sup> Barazi-Yeroulanos, L. 2010. Synthesis of Mediterranean marine finfish aquaculture – a marketing and promotion strategy. Studies and Reviews. General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. No. 88 Rome, FAO. 198p.

The strategy will be implemented through knowledge and result sharing with institutions as well as national and supranational projects. Bilateral initiatives will be also considered and technical assistance provided where there is a need to build national capacities so that existing commitments can be fulfilled equally.

The GFCM, through its relevant subsidiary bodies, should regularly assess the progress made by monitoring the achievement of the strategy targets, activities and outputs, reviewing, revising and updating expected outputs, as appropriate, and providing guidance to reach more effectively the objectives. The implementation of the strategy will also benefit from the support of the CAQ working groups and the AMShP.

*The terms used for the purpose of this strategy are defined in the CAQ glossary and the FAO Aquaculture Glossary (available online).*

**Resolution GFCM/41/2017/2**  
**on guidelines for the streamlining of aquaculture authorization and leasing processes**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

*RECALLING* that the objective of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of marine living resources, as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture in the GFCM area of application;

*RECOGNIZING* the important contribution of aquaculture to economic development and its essential role as a source of food and income for coastal communities of contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs);

*CONSISTENT WITH* the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in particular Article 9, which, *inter alia*, calls upon states to develop and regularly update strategies and plans, as required, with a view to ensuring that the development of aquaculture is environmentally sustainable and to enabling the rational use of shared resources between aquaculture and other activities;

*CONSIDERING* the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and more specifically SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”, of which Target 7 aims “by 2030, [to] increase the economic benefits to Small Island Developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism”;

*ACKNOWLEDGING* the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration that commits signatories to implement actions in support of sustainable aquaculture development to contribute to food security through the implementation of a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture which will support, *inter alia*, sustainable farming, as well as enhanced market access and trade environment, thereby creating employment opportunities and reducing the current stress on marine capture fisheries;

*ACKNOWLEDGING* that, at its thirty-ninth session (Italy, May 2015), the GFCM agreed to develop regional guidelines on the simplification of administrative procedures to streamline aquaculture authorization processes;

*RECOGNIZING* the need to have a regulatory and administrative framework dedicated to aquaculture in order to ensure a sound development of the sector;

*AWARE* of the necessity to adopt a common terminology related to the aquaculture authorization and leasing processes in CPCs;

*TAKING INTO ACCOUNT* the need to support the development of the sector also during applications for licences and leases to operate an aquaculture activity;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 and 8 of the GFCM Agreement, the following resolution:

1. CPCs should facilitate the implementation of the guidelines for the streamlining of aquaculture authorization and leasing processes as reproduced in Annex.

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE STREAMLINING OF AQUACULTURE AUTHORIZATION AND LEASING PROCESSES**

### **BACKGROUND**

Aquaculture production in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea has steadily grown over the past decades and this trend is projected to continue. The industry is a key player to achieve food security, employment and economic development and it is characterized by a wide range of production systems, farmed species and technologies in use.

Authorization and leasing processes are among the main constraints hampering the development of the sector in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Indeed, they tend to be lengthy and cumbersome, and constitute de facto barriers to the industry development.

The regulatory constraints facing aquaculture and the need for coordination to streamline authorization and leasing processes were acknowledged at the regional and international levels, including at the Regional Conference “Blue Growth in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea: developing sustainable aquaculture for food security” (Italy, December 2014) organized by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

### **SCOPE**

The overall objective of the guidelines is to support contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) in streamlining authorization and leasing processes in order to facilitate the development of aquaculture (Figure 1 illustrates such streamlined processes). This should be achieved through the provision of guiding principles and minimum common in order to: i) create an enabling environment for aquaculture development and foster viable investments; ii) facilitate the harmonious development of aquaculture; and iii) help achieving a level playing field in the region.

The guidelines specifically aim to:

- propose common definitions, concepts, standards and reference documents to support enabling regulatory frameworks;
- support coordination among the various bodies responsible for aquaculture-related matters; and
- promote soft law mechanisms to simplify administrative procedures for authorization and leasing processes.

### **NATURE**

The guidelines are advisory in nature and consistent with existing national, supranational and international instruments. They should be considered a tool at the disposal of CPCs to enhance existing processes.

Competent bodies should assess and monitor the implementation of the guidelines.

### **PRINCIPLES**

The guidelines rely on the principles of good governance, efficiency, transparency, accountability and social responsibility. They are based on the best available knowledge in terms of good practices in administrative and public sector management, efficient regulatory and administrative frameworks and participatory policy-making processes.

### **TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

For the purpose of the guidelines, the following definitions shall apply:

- **“Aquaculture”**: the farming of aquatic organisms that implies some sort of intervention in the rearing process to enhance production. Farming also implies individual or corporate ownership of the stock being cultivated (adapted from the FAO glossary of aquaculture).

- “**Aquaculture authorization process**” (or “**authorization process**”): the series of procedures that are necessary to obtain an aquaculture licence.
- “**Aquaculture licence**”: authorization for the installation and operation of a facility in water describing the activity that can be undertaken. An aquaculture licence usually specifies the species and the production limit (maximum allowed biomass) or the stocking density that are authorized for a defined area.
- “**Aquaculture leasing process**” (or “**leasing process**”): the series of procedures that are necessary to obtain an aquaculture lease.
- “**Aquaculture lease**”: exclusive right to use an area in water or state-owned submerged land for marine aquaculture. An aquaculture lease is usually granted for a defined period of time, in exchange of some form of payment.
- “**Aquaculture consenting process**”: procedure that includes authorization and leasing processes. The aquaculture consenting process refers to all actions to be undertaken by an investor through aquaculture consenting bodies, within a given administrative and regulatory framework, in order to perform an aquaculture activity.<sup>25</sup>
- “**Aquaculture consenting bodies**”: any entity that is responsible for decision-making and, where applicable, for providing advice on the aquaculture consenting process.
- “**Marine spatial planning**”: a public process of analysing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives that are usually specified through a political process.<sup>26</sup>
- “**Allocated zone for aquaculture (AZA)**”: a marine area where the development of aquaculture has priority over other uses, and therefore will be primarily dedicated to aquaculture. The identification of an AZA will result from zoning processes through participatory spatial planning, whereby administrative bodies legally establish that specific spatial areas within a region have priority for aquaculture development.<sup>27</sup>
- “**Environmental impact assessment (EIA)**”: a set of activities designed to identify and predict the impacts of a proposed action on the bio-geophysical environment and on human health and well-being, and to interpret and communicate information about the impacts and potential mitigation measures (adapted from the FAO glossary of aquaculture).
- “**Environmental monitoring programme (EMP)**”: for marine cage finfish farming, a flexible and adaptable functional tool at the disposal of authorities and aquaculture industry to monitor aquaculture management practices in order to ensure the environmental sustainability of the sector (adapted from the CAQ glossary).

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<sup>25</sup> Wherever applicable, leases and licences could also be renewed, amended, transferred, suspended or revoked. However, these guidelines address specifically the authorization and leasing processes for a new investor.

<sup>26</sup> Ehler, Charles, and Fanny Douvère. *Marine Spatial Planning: a step-by-step approach toward ecosystem-based management*. Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and Man and the Biosphere Programme. IOC Manual and Guides No. 53, ICAM Dossier No. 6. Paris: UNESCO. 2009 (English).

<sup>27</sup> Sanchez-Jerez, P., Karakassis, I., Massa, F., Fezzardi, D. and others. 2016. Aquaculture’s struggle for space: the need for coastal spatial planning and the potential benefits of Allocated Zones for Aquaculture (AZAs) to avoid conflict and promote sustainability. *Aquacult Environ Interact* 8:41-54. <https://doi.org/10.3354/aei00161>

## INSTITUTIONAL BENCHMARKS

The guidelines take into account relevant international instruments and milestones, in particular those related to sustainable aquaculture development and responsible fisheries, such as:

- The Codex Alimentarius, developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) since 1963, which is a collection of internationally recognized standards, codes of practice, guidelines and recommendations relating to food, food production and food safety.<sup>28</sup>
- The FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, unanimously adopted by the 1995 FAO Conference, which provides the first outline of a framework for international cooperation aimed at ensuring the sustainable exploitation of marine resources, in particular its Article 9.1.1: “States should establish, maintain and develop an appropriate legal and administrative framework which facilitates the development of responsible aquaculture”.<sup>29</sup>
- The 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which commits its member states to respect and promote principles and rights associated to the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.<sup>30</sup>
- The ecosystem approach to aquaculture (EAA), formalized in 2007 at an FAO expert workshop as “a strategy for the integration of aquaculture within the wider ecosystem in such a way that it promotes sustainable development, equity, and resilience of interlinked social and ecological systems”.<sup>31</sup>
- Marine spatial planning, in particular the document “Marine Spatial Planning: a step-by-step approach toward ecosystem-based management” prepared in 2009 by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and Man and the Biosphere Programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which aims at setting up a successful marine spatial planning initiative that can help achieving ecosystem-based management.<sup>32</sup>
- Environmental impact assessment (EIA), in particular the FAO technical paper on “Environmental impact assessment and monitoring in aquaculture”, which highlights the role of EIA in regulating the assessment of the environmental effects of a wide range of public and private projects, including aquaculture, which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.<sup>33</sup>
- The twenty-ninth session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) (31 January–4 February 2011), which provided recommendations on the role of FAO in the improved integration of fisheries and aquaculture development and management, biodiversity

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<sup>28</sup> FAO/WHO. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Codex Alimentarius.

<sup>29</sup> FAO. Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Rome, FAO. 1995. 41 p.

<sup>30</sup> ILO. Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Geneva, International Labour Office. 1998. 13 p.

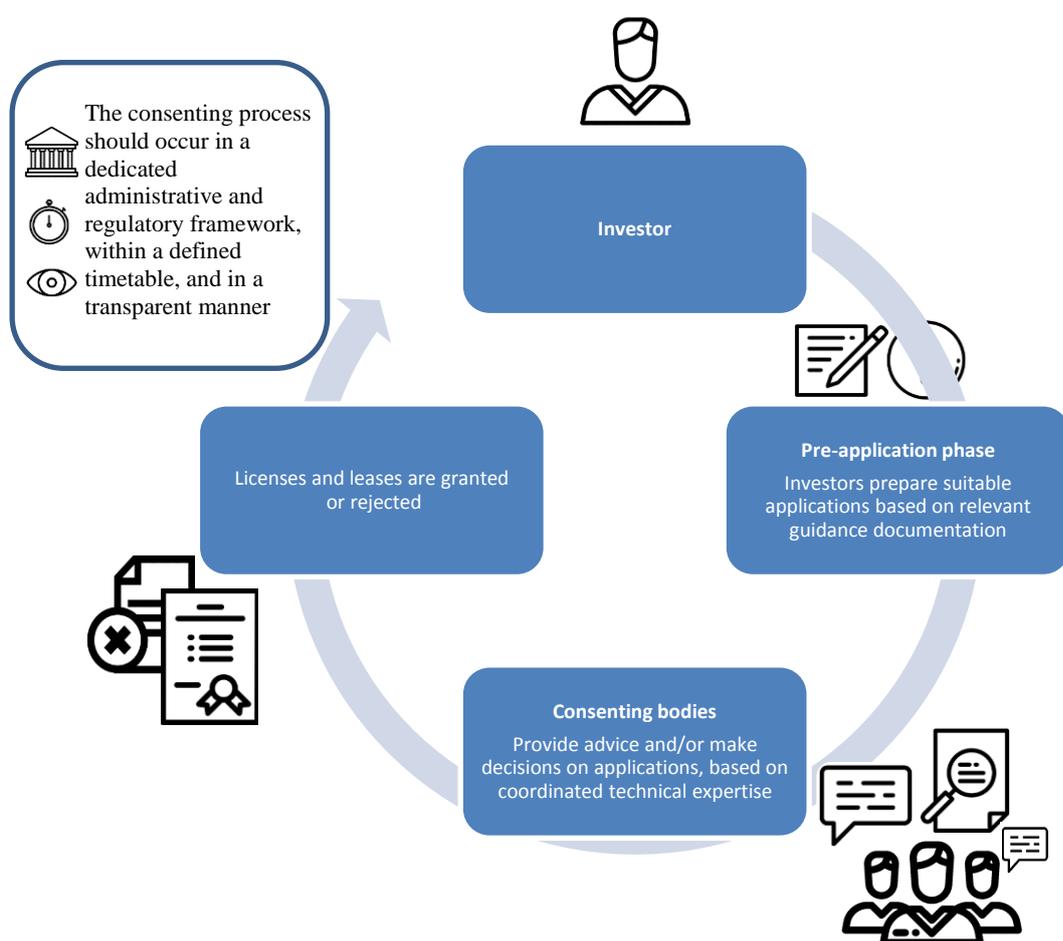
<sup>31</sup> Soto, D.; Aguilar-Manjarrez, J.; Hishamunda, N. (eds). Building an ecosystem approach to aquaculture. FAO/Universitat de les Illes Balears Expert Workshop. 7–11 May 2007, Palma de Mallorca, Spain. *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Proceedings*. No. 14. Rome, FAO. 2008. 221p.

<sup>32</sup> Ehler, Charles, and Fanny Douvère. Marine Spatial Planning: a step-by-step approach toward ecosystem-based management. Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and Man and the Biosphere Programme. IOC Manual and Guides No. 53, ICAM Dossier No. 6. Paris: UNESCO. 2009 (English).

<sup>33</sup> FAO. Environmental impact assessment and monitoring in aquaculture. *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper*. No. 527. Rome, FAO. 2009. 57 p.

conservation and environmental protection.<sup>34</sup>

- The FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification, adopted in 2011 at the twenty-ninth session of the COFI, which provide advice on developing, organizing and implementing credible aquaculture certification schemes.<sup>35</sup>
- Resolution GFCM/36/2012/1 on guidelines on allocated zones for aquaculture (AZAs), which invites CPCs to include, in their national marine spatial planning strategy for the development and management of aquaculture, schemes for the identification and allocation of specific zones reserved for aquaculture activities, and introduces the concepts of allowable zone of effect and environmental monitoring programme.<sup>36</sup>
- The International Standard ISO 14004:2016 of the International Organization for Standardization, which provides guidance on the establishment, implementation, maintenance and improvement of a robust, credible and reliable environmental management system.<sup>37</sup>



**Figure 1: Streamlined aquaculture authorization and leasing processes**

<sup>34</sup> FAO. Report of the twenty-ninth session of the Committee on Fisheries. Rome, 31 January–4 February 2011. *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report*. No. 973. Rome, FAO. 2011. 59 pp.

<sup>35</sup> FAO. Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification. Rome, FAO. 2011. 122 pp.

<sup>36</sup> FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. Report of the thirty-sixth session. Marrakech, Morocco, 14–19 May 2012. GFCM Report. No. 36. Rome, FAO. 2012. 71 pp.

<sup>37</sup> ISO 14004:2016. Environmental management systems — General guidelines on implementation.

## **REGULATORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK**

A regulatory and administrative framework dedicated to aquaculture should be ensured in order to reinforce the legal certainty of the aquaculture industry and enshrine its development, in a sustainable manner, within an appropriate governance framework.

Wherever necessary, a specific law or regulation on aquaculture should be issued and/or amended to improve the existing regulatory and administrative framework, with specific provisions on:

- the administrative procedures and processes for granting licences and leases, possibly included in a single authorization, ensuring the legal certainty of the investor and the granting body;
- the use of the public domain for aquaculture, with specific reference to aquaculture planning (for new areas for aquaculture development and for areas with pre-existing aquaculture development) and to aquaculture site selection, with associated criteria and requirements;
- the use of coordinated spatial planning and associated tools (e.g. geographic information system);
- the harmonization of aquaculture development plans with other national and supranational spatial planning and plans, policies and programmes;
- the mandatory establishment of AZAs;
- the quality of the environment where aquaculture takes place, including in particular water quality requirements and defining the levels of chemical and ecological quality and of ecosystem and biodiversity protection as well as environmental monitoring modalities; and
- the establishment of mechanisms for communication, cooperation and coordination among national authorities involved in planning, development, conservation and management of coastal areas.

The consistency of policy and legislation among different authorities, at different scales and levels and among diverse sectors should be promoted.

Soft and secondary law tools, such as guidelines and voluntary schemes, should be developed and adopted to simplify administrative procedures while ensuring a legally robust process for granting licences and leases.

## **CONSENTING BODIES**

Consenting processes are associated with a number of rules and procedures involving various consenting bodies.

The number of bodies involved in the consenting process should be kept to a minimum in order to reduce the time lapse between application and final decision, minimize consultation processes, and avoid duplication of efforts by investors and overlapping of competences among consenting bodies.

The number of consenting bodies should guarantee sufficient expertise to obtain decisive advice and informed decisions, based on the best available knowledge, for the implementation of aquaculture activities.

A coordinating body could be established at the national level to enhance institutional and administrative coordination. It could comprise representatives from different competent public institutions or departments where specific expertise on aquaculture would be concentrated, and be linked to existing national initiatives on aquaculture.

## **REFERENCE CONTACT POINTS**

The establishment of a reference contact point for the aquaculture consenting process, such as in the “one-stop-shop” or “single-window” approach, should be considered. Such reference contact point

could be hosted by an existing competent authority at the national level (or at the appropriate first-level administrative division according to competences over aquaculture in the country, e.g. regions, provinces or municipalities); this could then require the consent of other authorities, as appropriate. The establishment of an online platform for the submission, analysis and processing of licence and lease applications could be envisaged; this platform could work in an interoperational manner with other systems in use among all relevant consenting bodies.

The reference contact points could bring the following benefits:

- act as a single contact that drives the whole aquaculture consenting process and eases the submission of applications by investors;
- provide a general view on legislations and regulations governing aquaculture activities, thus enabling a streamlined and coordinated process from submission to decision, so that consents are granted at the same time or in an appropriate sequence;
- provide an overview and proactive guidance on all stages of the consenting process from the pre-application phase to the decision phase, for all types of licences and leases (marine finfish, marine shellfish, algae or seaweed farm, etc.) as well as on the zones, production techniques and environmental requisites for aquaculture development;
- provide and make available consent application forms to investors, who could download them and complete them electronically; and
- facilitate efficient dialogue between investors and aquaculture consenting bodies, if and when additional information is required, and inform investors on contact details of key people in the aquaculture consenting bodies.

## **CONSENTING PROCESS**

The consenting process includes a series of procedures, ranging from the preparation of administrative documentation to the release of licences and leases.

The consenting process is applied, but not limited, to the following decisions:

- granting of an aquaculture licence or lease in a designated AZA;
- amendment of an aquaculture licence or lease;
- renewal of an aquaculture licence or lease;
- assignment of an aquaculture licence or lease;
- granting of a special experimental licence or lease; and
- reallocation of an aquaculture site.

The consenting process should be facilitated by the formal establishment of AZAs, which are considered as a management tool for the sound integration of aquaculture within marine spatial planning and coastal areas. AZA establishment should be pursued to shorten the duration of the consenting process.

Criteria and parameters to identify suitable areas for aquaculture should be adopted, including through:

- the analysis of technical, logistical, social, economic and environmental parameters for the definition of ecosystem boundaries and the selection of areas;
- the assessment of carrying capacity;
- the assessment of the risks associated to aquaculture activities on specific aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity (e.g. alien species, escapees and use of chemicals);
- the assessment of the management measures identified and associated to the prevention of risks;

- the identification of appropriate aquaculture farming technologies to be adapted to each site and species farmed; and
- the review of existing users in the area in order to avoid competition among them.

### **Pre-application phase**

Before lodging an application, investors are required to prepare a series of documents to be submitted to the consenting bodies. The pre-application phase is essential to the consenting process and should help investors clarify the nature and expected performance of their investment.

The introduction of a pre-application phase should be promoted to initiate discussions between investors and aquaculture consenting bodies and ensure that the correct information is available to investors before the full application is lodged.

The pre-application phase could, *inter alia*, help flag issues, pre-empt progress on non-viable sites, provide advice to investors and enable a more efficient and focused application.

Clear procedures and assessment criteria for licence and lease applications, that are coherent and comply with regulatory requirements, should be established.

Feedback mechanisms to inform the pre-application phase and refine management systems for final submission should be established.

### **Documentation**

#### General guidance documents

A minimum set of guidance documents on the granting of aquaculture licences and leases for all types of aquaculture activities, also reflecting local provisions, should be made available to investors.

These documents should cover all requirements in relation to aquaculture operations. Among other things, guidance documents should:

- be drafted in a language that is simple, clear and understandable for the general public;
- provide information that is consistent among the aquaculture consenting bodies to improve the quality of applications and reduce the time required for approval;
- list the competent authorities (e.g. Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Rural Development, etc.) the consent of whom is required for the granting of licences and leases;
- explain the procedures and formalities to obtain an aquaculture licence and lease, possibly with descriptive flowcharts that indicate the actors involved and the time limits for each procedural step, including appeals processes;
- provide full guidance on protocol and required documents if there is a process prior to the pre-application phase;
- give a detailed description of the information to be provided by an investor for the full application, including:
  - technical information: farming system and characteristics, farmed species and cycles, production capacity, annual feed consumption, plan of the whole farm, etc.;
  - environmental information: bathymetry, temperature, salinity, current speed, benthic community, sensitive habitats, etc.;
  - geographical information: maps and location of proposed farming areas, available areas in AZAs, etc.;
  - economic feasibility and integrity of the project: information on capital investment, such as equipment and construction budget costs, estimated unit production costs, annual

- production planning projections, annual operating costs, financial ratios, returns on investment analysis, etc.; and
- socio-economic information: benefits associated to the activities in surrounding areas, such as job opportunities associated to the aquaculture activity;
- list procedures related to the operation and monitoring of aquaculture farms (EMP);
- describe the main procedures on the market of aquaculture products, including food production and safety regulations in place; and
- provide a general overview of legislations and regulations governing aquaculture activities.

#### Environmental impact assessment monitoring and guidance

The environmental impact assessment (EIA) varies significantly depending on the national, and sometimes local, context. Whenever applicable, the EIA could be included in the consenting process and facilitated by the reference contact point.

Guidance documentation on EIA should place the investors in a position to carry out a cost-effective and practical assessment. The authorities at the appropriate level should indicate, when possible, the environmental objectives and associated indicators, standards and reference points to ensure compliance with the provisions of national and supranational environmental regulations, as well as associated timetables.

In addition, guidance documentation on EIA should clearly indicate relevant norms and rules, including rules to control and manage pollution and waste discharge as well as suggestions on how to introduce codes for better management practices.

Guidance documentation should also provide full information on the potential impacts of aquaculture on the different aquatic ecosystems, including environmental descriptors and standards, and on the suggested procedures to apply in order to mitigate such impacts.

Environmental impact assessment and monitoring should be considered within a wider management framework. They should also be accompanied by an explanation on how the EMP should be established, including a distinction between the rules to be followed by authorities and by investors, their respective responsibilities and clear procedures to be applied in the monitoring process.

Templates and logbook systems for environmental monitoring should be put at the disposal of investors.

The whole environmental assessment, including EIA reports and results, should be made available to the general public in a transparent and understandable way.

#### **Facilitated licences and leases**

The facilitation, for a number of years, of specific types of aquaculture production, should be assessed.

Ad hoc licences or leases should be promoted and granted for innovative or research aquaculture activities, in particular for the activities involving a production that contributes to maintaining ecosystem services:

- Experimental development licences could be granted to activities that test, develop or adopt innovative farming systems and technologies (e.g. low carbon footprint), diversify production, carry out basic and/or applied research, etc.
- Licences and leases could be granted to activities that contribute to maintaining ecosystem services, such as: shellfish and algae aquaculture, which contributes to removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the environment; integrated multi-trophic aquaculture, which helps creating balanced systems for environment remediation (bio-mitigation) through a combination of fed aquaculture with inorganic and organic extractive aquaculture; and aquaculture associated to marine protected areas, which uses marine finfish and shellfish restocking for conservation purposes.

## **Timeframe**

A timeframe, with a monthly breakdown, should be set for each aquaculture consenting body (or step) within the consenting process, to help investors plan their investment schedule.

The timeframe should indicate the expected time periods for:

- the pre-application assessment and advice provision; and
- the evaluation of applications and the communication of decisions, taking into account the legislation in place and associated consenting bodies.

## **Licence and lease terms**

Wherever applicable, aquaculture consenting bodies could also be entitled to perform one or more of the following actions: renew, amend, transfer, suspend and revoke aquaculture licences and leases.

The longest duration of licences and leases validity should be promoted, and a minimum number of years should be ensured to enable investors securing returns on investment.

Validity and renewability conditions could be imposed on licences and leases to ensure the best use of leased marine areas. Such conditions could be based on compliance and performance criteria in terms of:

- environmental quality standards;
- gross or repeated infringement of the provisions set out in or pursuant to aquaculture regulations;
- cases where the licence is not used, or is only used to a limited extent; and
- facilitated licences conditions.

Any breach of an underlying condition should result in licence and lease revocation or suspension, and/or fettering of the renewal process.

## **INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY, COORDINATION AND PARTICIPATION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

Awareness on the relevance of aquaculture development for local and coastal communities should be enhanced among institutions. The institutional and administrative capacities of the consenting bodies should be strengthened at the national and local levels in order to increase staff capacity to handle aquaculture issues and consenting processes.

To this end, institutional mechanisms and programmes should be implemented. These should address, among other things:

- knowledge sharing and communication flows on aquaculture development and authorization and leasing processes;
- ad hoc capacity-building programmes to increase staff competencies and practical capacity to cope with administrative aquaculture authorization and leasing processes;
- the availability of reference documents and guidelines that include the provisions of national and supranational environmental regulations (e.g. descriptors of environment quality, criteria to assess environment status, water quality requirements, potential impacts, specific monitoring programmes, and parameters to be assessed and monitored) allowing for the development of aquaculture activities; and
- the introduction of working methods and procedures to enhance the effectiveness of institutions in responding to investors needs.

Participatory and consenting mechanisms and programmes involving local communities and other interest groups in aquaculture planning and development should also be put in place or enhanced,

possibly through the setting up of multi-stakeholder platforms or other consultation committees, with a view to increasing the social acceptability of aquaculture.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES**

The particularities of the different stages of industry maturity in the area, as well as regional specificities and the different legal contexts in Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian countries, should be taken into account. The capacity of developing states in the region should also be considered in implementing the guidelines.

To ensure their effective implementation and secure a level playing field in the region, the guidelines should be adaptive so that they can be adjusted, if necessary. Specific work to address implementation should be carried out, as appropriate, possibly through the provision of technical assistance.

**Resolution GFCM/41/2017/3  
on the reactivation of the Working Group on Fishing Technology**

*ACKNOWLEDGING* relevant activities of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) and the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS) carried out in response to requests by contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) aiming to improve fishing technology in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;

*NOTING* the decision by the Commission at its thirtieth session (Turkey, January 2006) to establish the TechnoMed network as a transversal working group of the SAC;

*RECALLING* the objective of the TechnoMed network which is to assist the GFCM in facilitating the exchange of information between scientists involved in research on fishing technology;

*ALSO RECALLING* the outcomes of the GFCM Transversal Working Group on Selectivity, which met within the framework of the TechnoMed network, *inter alia*, in 2008 and 2009 to address terms and concepts of relevance to fishing technology;

*TAKING INTO ACCOUNT* the ongoing work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on fishing technology;

*NOTING* the mid-term strategy (2017-2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries as well as the need to reverse the current trend in the exploitation of Mediterranean and Black Sea stocks, including through the monitoring and mitigation of unwanted interactions between fisheries and marine ecosystems;

*CONSIDERING* the necessity to reactivate the Working Group on Fishing Technology (WGFiT);

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 and 8 of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, the following resolution:

1. The WGFiT and its activities shall be included on a permanent basis in the GFCM work programme.
2. The terms of reference of the WGFiT shall include the following objectives:
  - assist the SAC and the WGBS in formulating scientific advice on fishing technology aspects;
  - promote cooperation between Mediterranean and Black Sea scientists involved in fishing technology and selectivity studies;
  - assure a permanent watch on fishing technology issues in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea; and
  - monitor issues relating to the typology of fishing fleet.
3. The WGFiT shall primarily rely on networking through the exchange of field experience and information and shall organize meetings on fishing technology issues, in particular fishing gear selectivity, at the request of the SAC and WGBS, as appropriate.
4. The WGFiT shall continue to review and examine the technical elements brought to its attention by the SAC and the WGBS and report accordingly.

**Resolution GFCM/41/2017/4**  
**on a permanent working group on vulnerable marine ecosystems**

*ACKNOWLEDGING* the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolutions 59/25, 61/105 and 64/72 on sustainable fisheries, in particular regarding the obligation to prevent significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs);

*TAKING INTO ACCOUNT* the 2009 FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas, which provide states and regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements (RFMO/As) with guidance in formulating and implementing appropriate measures for the management of deep-sea fisheries in the high seas through a range of management tools and measures necessary to ensure the conservation of target and non-target species as well as affected habitats;

*TAKING NOTE* of the mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, Target 4: “Minimize and mitigate unwanted interactions between fisheries and marine ecosystems and environment”;

*CONSIDERING* the advice of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) regarding the protection of VMEs, based on the outcomes of the first meeting of the Working Group on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (WGVME) (Spain, April 2017);

*CONSIDERING* the necessity to give a more permanent status to the activities of the WGVME;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 and 8 of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement), the following resolution:

1. The WGVME and its activities should be included, on a permanent basis, in the GFCM annual work programme;
2. The mandate and terms of reference of the WGVME, as provided in the Annex, should be reviewed and complemented so as to ensure the implementation of the above-mentioned UNGA resolutions.
3. The WGVME should continue to review and examine, in 2018, the technical elements<sup>1</sup> for the protection of VMEs in the GFCM area of application, as provided by the SAC at its nineteenth session (Slovenia, May 2017), in order to formulate advice towards the adoption by the Commission of dedicated protocols for the protection of VMEs, in line with similar protocols established by other regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs).
4. The WGVME should also contribute to identify the technical elements concerning management measures to be applied for:
  - fishing vessels above 15 m length overall (LOA) operating with bottom contact fishing gear targeting the species *Aristaeomorpha foliacea*, *Aristeus antennatus*, or *Plesionika martia*; and
  - fishing vessels above 15 m LOA operating with bottom contact gear (bottom trawls, bottom set gillnets, bottom longlines and pots and traps) at depths deeper than 300 m.

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<sup>1</sup> Notably on the basis of the work of the WGVME.

**Terms of reference for a permanent working group on vulnerable marine ecosystems**

As agreed by the fortieth session of the GFCM, the Working Group on VMEs (WGVME) was established to develop initial measures related to the protection of VMEs in the GFCM area of application, in accordance with the FAO mandate. Once such initial measures are defined, the WGVME should also provide advice for the SAC.

In particular the WGVME should carry out the following tasks:

- collect information and map the distribution of VMEs (annual update);
- advise on new proposals for closures and on the enforcement of existing measures (efficiency of existing FRAs addressing VME protection);
- assess technical information provided by fishers and other institutions;
- advise the SAC on any VME-related matter and coordinate the elaboration of management tools.

The WGVME will also contribute to:

- the design and management of the Mediterranean VME geodatabase;
- the establishment of a close collaboration and proper communication channels with scientific bodies from other RFMOs (e.g. ICES working group on deep-water ecology), scientific national institutions and the FAO.

**Resolution GFCM/41/2017/5**  
**on a network of essential fish habitats in the GFCM area of application**

*RECALLING* the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement), which foresees that the GFCM shall adopt multiannual management plans based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries to guarantee the maintenance of stocks above levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield, and establish fisheries restricted areas (FRAs) for the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, including nursery and spawning areas, also to complement measures included in the multiannual management plans;

*RECALLING* the mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, Target 1 “Reverse the declining trend of fish stocks through strengthened scientific advice in support of management” and the related Output 1.3 “Enhanced science-based GFCM regulations on fisheries management”;

*RECALLING* the commitment made by the Mediterranean ministries for fisheries of the signatory countries of the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration, which calls upon the contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) as well as the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) to present in 2018, at the forty-second session of the GFCM, proposals for the establishment of new FRAs in order to create a consistent network of essential fish habitats;

*CONSIDERING* that the SAC has reported that over 80 percent of the fish stocks assessed in 2017 are in overexploitation and that more than 40 percent of these have a low biomass;

*CONSIDERING* that, for key commercial stocks like European hake (*Merluccius merluccius*), the SAC recommended to take immediate management actions to reduce fishing mortality through multiannual management plans and to identify new nursery areas;

*AWARE* of the need to implement the ecosystem approach to fisheries management in the Mediterranean Sea;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 and 8 of the GFCM Agreement, the following resolution:

1. Taking into account the existing FRAs, the SAC should present in 2018, at the forty-second session of the GFCM, elements for the establishment of new FRAs, without prejudice to the sovereign rights of the states and in accordance with applicable international law, in particular to establish a consistent network of essential fish habitats<sup>1</sup>, following a thorough consultation process.
2. The Commission, during its forty-second session should agree upon a progressive calendar with quantified objectives to establish this network.
3. To achieve this, the SAC is invited to:
  - review the existing information on the distribution of essential fish habitats in the Mediterranean;

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<sup>1</sup> Essential fish habitat are defined as habitats identified as essential to the ecological and biological requirements for critical life history stages of exploited fish species, and which may require special protection to improve the status of the stocks and long-term sustainability

- review the existing information on the distribution of sensitive habitats<sup>2</sup> in the Mediterranean;
  - identify possible knowledge gaps and provide advice on measures to overcome these, including through predictive modelling and mapping of habitat suitability, showing the likelihood of their presence;
  - define a consistent network of essential fish habitats which would also consider sensitive habitats, to be presented at the forty-second session of the GFCM; and
  - provide advice on how to implement the protection of this network, and enhance it from 2018, in order to effectively contribute to achieve the maximum sustainable yield and implement the ecosystem approach to fisheries management in line with the GFCM objectives.
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<sup>2</sup> Sensitive habitats are fragile habitats that are recognized internationally as ecologically important, which support important assemblages of commercial and non-commercial fish species and which may require special protection

**Resolution GFCM/41/2017/6  
on the application of an International Maritime Organization number**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

*RECALLING* that the objective of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of marine living resources in the GFCM area of application;

*EMPHASIZING* that the identification of fishing vessels is a necessary step in the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and for the management of fishing activities, and that the International Maritime Organization (IMO) number, assigned under the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme, is an established and reliable unique vessel identifier (UVI), which stays permanently assigned to a vessel irrespective of change of name, ownership, flag or marking;

*TAKING INTO ACCOUNT* the decision by the IMO Assembly, at its twenty-eighth session, in 2013, to adopt Resolution A.1078(28) extending the application of the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme to fishing vessels of 100 gross tonnage (GT) and above, and the decision by the Committee on Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), at its thirty-first session, in 2014, to use the IMO number as the UVI for vessels of 100 GT and above to be included in the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (Global Record);

*NOTING* the IMO Circular Letter No. 1886/Rev. 6, of 8 August 2016, which extends the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme to all motorized fishing vessels of less than 100 GT down to a size limit of 12 metres in length overall (LOA) that are authorized to operate outside waters under national jurisdiction, and fishing vessels of non-steel hull construction of 100 GT and above;

*CONSIDERING* that most regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) mandate the use of IMO numbers by large fishing vessels authorized to fish in their respective convention areas and that the United Nations General Assembly has encouraged several times, most recently in its Resolution 71/123 of 7 December 2016, those RFMOs which have not yet done so to make the IMO number compulsory in their convention areas for all eligible vessels;

*RECALLING* Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/6 concerning the establishment of a GFCM record of vessels over 15 metres authorized to operate in the GFCM area of application, amending Recommendation GFCM/29/2005/2;

*RECALLING* that the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration states that “by 2020, [Ministers, heads of national delegations and the European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries] ensure the allocation of a unique vessel identifier (IMO number) to commercial fishing vessels of 24 meters and above (with the exemption of wooden vessels) in line with the applicable international rules”;

*ACKNOWLEDGING* the rapid development of requirements for fishing vessels to acquire an IMO number and the need to provide clarity to fishing vessel operators and flag states in this regard;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 and 8 of the GFCM Agreement, the following resolution:

### *Identification of vessels with an IMO number*

1. Effective from 1 January 2019, contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) flag states shall authorize their fishing vessels of 24 meters or above to operate, only if eligible vessels have an IMO number allocated by the manager of the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme. Eligible vessels under the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme which are not identified with this number shall not be included in the record of vessels over 15 metres authorized to operate in the GFCM area of application (GFCM-AVL).
2. Eligible vessels under the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme which are not identified with this number shall not be included in the GFCM-AVL.
3. CPC flag states shall be encouraged to authorize any other fishing vessel, eligible to obtain an IMO number, in accordance with the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme, to operate in the GFCM area of application, only if the vessel has an IMO number allocated by the manager of the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme, as described in the Annex.
4. A vessel without IMO number could exceptionally be included in the GFCM-AVL on the condition that the CPC flag state provides an explanation of its inability to obtain an IMO number in its submission of information to the GFCM Secretariat. The GFCM Secretariat shall report such explanation to the Compliance Committee.
5. Paragraphs 1 and 2 shall not apply to wooden vessels.
6. The IMO number shall be included in all relevant data related to the implementation of GFCM recommendations concerning the establishment of a record of vessels authorized to operate in the GFCM area of application.
7. Each CPC shall, in its capacity, apply this resolution to vessels that are flying its flag.
8. This resolution is without prejudice to the implementation of stricter national measures.

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**Eligibility criteria to obtain an IMO number**

With a view to implementing paragraph 3, criteria to determine whether a fishing vessel is eligible to obtain an IMO number are based on the scheme established by the IMO and may be updated in the future. Based on Resolution A.1078 (28), as amended, on the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme, and on the IMO Circular Letter No. 1886/Rev. 6, of 8 August 2016, the following fishing vessels are eligible for an IMO number:

- fishing vessels, including fishing vessels with a non-steel hull (i.e. wooden vessels), of 100 GT and above; and
- motorized inboard fishing vessels of less than 100 GT up to a size limit of 12 metres LOA authorized to operate outside waters under national jurisdiction.

***Requesting an IMO number***

The IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme is currently managed on behalf of the IMO by IHS Maritime & Trade, a UK based company. Requests for an IMO number can be made directly to IHS Maritime & Trade, online or in writing as follows: online requests for ship numbering (<http://imonumbers.ihs.com>); written requests (to IHS Maritime & Trade; Sentinel House, 163 Brighton Road - Surrey, CR5 2YH, United Kingdom).

Requests for IMO numbers can be made by flag States, vessel owners/operators, classification societies or shipyards; requests for multiple IMO numbers can also be addressed to the managers of the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme at the following e-mail address: [ship.imo@ihs.com](mailto:ship.imo@ihs.com).

**Pending proposal for a GFCM recommendation on the establishment of a minimum conservation reference size for blackspot seabream in the Mediterranean Sea**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (hereafter "the GFCM"),

*CONSIDERING* that the objective of the Agreement for the Establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (hereafter "the Agreement") is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at biological, social, economic and environmental level, of living marine resources in the area of application;

*CONSIDERING* that the GFCM shall adopt management measures based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries to guarantee the maintenance of stocks above levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield;

*RECALLING* that the Malta Ministerial declaration "MedFish4Ever" requires that in the context of establishing an ecosystem-based fisheries management framework, all key fisheries should be managed with management plans;

*CONSIDERING* that the GFCM shall apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (hereafter the "FAO");

*CONSIDERING* that the blackspot seabream has a peculiar biological life history (*protandric hermaphrodite* species) with relevant percent of individuals changing sex to females at around 33 cm total length while the size at first maturity (L50%) is around 30 cm for males and 36 cm for females. These biological characteristics are similar to stocks distributed in different geographical areas;

*CONSIDERING* the high socio-economic importance of fisheries, especially local fisheries, exploiting blackspot seabream and the need to ensure their sustainability;

*CONSIDERING* that the blackspot seabream is also targeted by recreational fisheries;

*NOTING* that the blackspot seabream is included in the list of priority species of GFCM for the Western Mediterranean;

*NOTING* that for blackspot seabream exists a high level of illegal, unreported and unregulated catches (IUU) all over the Mediterranean and that a more adequate monitoring of involved fishing fleets, including recreational fisheries, is needed;

*NOTING* that the SAC agrees on the needs, as highlighted by the SRC-WM, for the provision of advice for the potential establishment of management measures including, inter alia, an improved the bio-economic monitoring and effort standardization of the fisheries;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5b, 8 b and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, the following recommendation:

**PART I**

**General objective, geographical scope and definitions**

1. The general objective of the present recommendation is to protect juvenile "blackspot seabream" in the Mediterranean Sea.

2. For the purpose of this recommendation, “blackspot seabream” means fish pertaining to the species: *Pagellus bogaraveo*.

**PART II**  
**Minimum conservation reference size**

3. The minimum conservation reference size for blackspot seabream in the whole area covered by this recommendation is fixed at XX<sup>1</sup> cm total length.

4. Specimens of blackspot seabream shall be measured from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail fin.

5. Specimens of blackspot seabream smaller than the minimum conservation reference size, defined in paragraph 3, in total length as reported above and measured to the lowest centimetre, shall not be caught, retained on board, transhipped, transferred, landed, stored, sold, displayed or offered for sale.

6. Notwithstanding paragraph 5, when due to unavoidable circumstances undersized specimens of blackspot seabream have been effectively caught, the master of the catching vessel shall record those catches (estimated weight) of undersized specimens.

7. The GFCM Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) shall establish an adequate mechanism for recording catches of undersized specimens of blackspot seabream

8. Without prejudice to provisions foreseen in paragraph 5 and when a system of avoiding discards and obligation to land all catches has been established by a CPC, except in justified cases where there is a derogation for landing obligations (especially in case of fisheries where high-survival rates are well documented), the master of the fishing vessel shall not be allowed to discard those catches and shall therefore land all the fish caught independently of the size of the fish. All quantities of undersize fish landed shall be recorded and shall not be displayed, offered for sale or used for direct human consumption.

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<sup>1</sup> To be defined in line with the scientific advice of the SAC in 2018.

**Pending proposal for a GFCM recommendation on measures concerning recreational fishing activities in the Mediterranean Sea**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (hereafter "the GFCM"),

*CONSIDERING* that the objective of the Agreement for the Establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (hereafter "the Agreement") is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at biological, social, economic and environmental level, of living marine resources in the area of application;

*RECALLING* that in giving effect to the objective of the Agreement, the GFCM shall adopt recommendations on conservation and management measures aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of fishing activities, in order to preserve the marine living resources and the economic and social viability of fisheries; in adopting such recommendations, the GFCM shall give particular attention to measures to prevent overfishing and minimize discards. The GFCM shall also pay particular attention to the potential impacts on small-scale fisheries and local communities;

*RECALLING* that in giving effect to the objective of the Agreement, the GFCM shall foster, as appropriate, a subregional approach to fisheries management and aquaculture development in order to better address the specificities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;

*CONSIDERING* that the GFCM shall adopt management measures based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries to guarantee the maintenance of stocks above levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield;

*CONSIDERING* that all measures formulated by the GFCM shall be based on the best scientific advice available, taking into account relevant environmental, economic and social factors;

*CONSIDERING* that the GFCM shall apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries;

*CONSIDERING* the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (hereafter the "FAO") providing that "States should apply the precautionary approach widely to conservation, management and exploitation of living aquatic resources in order to protect them and preserve the aquatic environment. The absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures.";

*TAKING INTO ACCOUNT* the need to regulate recreational fishing activities to ensure that these activities do not undermine sustainable exploitation of the stocks, in the Mediterranean Sea;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with the relevant applicable provisions of the GFCM Agreement:

**PART I  
Definitions**

1. The present Recommendation shall apply to the area covered by the GFCM agreement with the exclusion of the Black Sea. This recommendation shall apply without prejudice of stricter measures already adopted by law at national level.

2. For the purpose of this Recommendation, "recreational fisheries" means a non-commercial fishing activity exploiting marine living aquatic resources for recreation tourism or sport.

**PART II**  
**Management measures**

3. GFCM contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties shall take the necessary measures to forbid, within the framework of recreational fisheries, the use of fishing gears which are already forbidden for commercial fishing activities by international and/or national laws.
4. Spear-guns shall be prohibited if used in conjunction with underwater breathing apparatus (aqualung) and at night from sunset to dawn.
5. In line with national applicable rules, recreational fisheries for each vessel or natural person may be subject to the authorization issued by the flag State contracting party and cooperating non-contracting party, based on the list of species identified by the SAC, as referred in paragraph 8 hereunder.
6. The marketing of fish caught in recreational fisheries shall be prohibited.

**PART III**  
**Scientific monitoring and evaluation**

7. The Scientific, Advisory Committee (SAC) shall identify in 2017 and will present to the Commission for adoption, the list of species for which recreational fisheries or activities have a significant impact on the marine biological resources. The SAC will also propose to the Commission appropriate measures for data collection and monitoring of recreational fishery activities
  8. Where recreational fisheries are found to have a significant impact, the GFCM may adopt further measures aimed at strengthening specific management measures for recreational fisheries, such as fishing authorisations and catch declarations.
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**Pending proposal for a recommendation on fisheries management measures for the conservation of sharks and rays in the GFCM area of application, amending Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/3**

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

*RECALLING* that the objectives of the Agreement establishing the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean are to promote the development, conservation, rational management and proper utilization of living marine resources;

*RECALLING* the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development of 2002 and in particular its Plan of Implementation;

*RECALLING* the Declaration of the Ministerial Conference for Sustainable Development of the Fisheries in the Mediterranean held in Venice on 2003;

*REAFFIRMING* the principles of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and recalling the precautionary and ecosystem approach to fishery management;

*RECALLING* the FAO International Plan of action for the Conservation and the management of Sharks (IPOA-sharks);

*RECALLING* the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and the listing of some sharks species in either Annex II or Annex III of its Protocol concerning the Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (hereinafter SPA/BD Protocol);

*NOTING* the importance of harmonizing conservation and management measures with other international conventions responsible for the protection of these species;

*TAKING INTO ACCOUNT* the SAC advice and in particular the needs for species identification and to ensure better conservation status to sharks including protection of coastal areas from most active fishing gear;

*ADOPTS* in conformity with the provision of Article III paragraph 1 (b) and (h) and Article V of the GFCM Agreement that:

**PART I  
Scope**

1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties of the GFCM (hereafter referred to as CPCs) shall ensure that sharks are kept on board, transhipped, landed and marketed at first sale in a way that species are recognizable and identifiable and catches, incidental takings and, whenever appropriate, releases by species can be monitored and recorded.

2. CPCs shall adopt fisheries management measures to ensure adequate conservation status to sharks.

**Definitions**

3. For the purposes of this Recommendation the following definitions shall apply:

‘Shark’ means any fish of the taxon Elasmobranchii

‘Shark fins’ means any fins of sharks including caudal fins, but excluding the pectoral fins of rays, which are a constituent part of ray wings;

‘trawl nets’ means nets which are actively towed by the main boat engine and consisting of a cone- or pyramid-shaped body (as trawl body) closed at the back by a cod-end and which can extend at the opening by the wings or can be mounted on a rigid frame. Horizontal opening is either obtained by otter boards or provided by a beam or frame of variable shape and size. Such nets can be towed either on the bottom (bottom trawl net) or in midwater (pelagic trawl net);

## **PART II**

### **Fisheries management measures**

4. CPCs shall ensure that:

- it shall be prohibited to remove shark fins on board vessels and to retain, tranship or land shark fins.
- in order to facilitate on-board storage, shark fins may be partially sliced through and folded against the carcass, but shall not be removed from the carcass before landing.
- beheading and skinning of specimens on board and before landing shall be prohibited. Beheaded and skinned sharks cannot be marketed at the first sale markets after landing;
- It shall be prohibited to purchase, offer for sale or sell shark fins which have been removed, retained on board, transhipped or landed in contravention of this Recommendation.

5. Reduction of trawl fishing in coastal areas to enhance protection of coastal sharks

A) CPCs shall ensure that fishing activities carried out with trawl nets are prohibited within 3 nautical miles off the coast, provided that the 50 meters isobath is not reached, or within the 50 meters isobath where that depth is reached at a shorter distance from the coast.

B) Specific and spatially limited derogation may be granted by the Members on condition that affects a limited number of vessels and provided that such derogation:

a. is justified by particular geographical constraints, such as the limited size of continental shelf along the entire coastline of a Member State or the limited extent of trawlable fishing grounds due to different causes;

and/or

b. concerns small trawl vessels of less than or equal to 12 metres overall length and engine power of less than or equal to 85 kW traditionally carried out in coastal areas;

or

c. concerns a limited number of vessels during a seasonal fishing campaign;

and

d. has no significant impact on the marine environment.

C) CPCs shall inform the GFCM on the modalities of applying the derogation under point B) no later than 31 March 2013. This notification shall include:

a. a list of authorised trawl fishing vessels with their characteristics,

b. zones as identified by geographic coordinates both on land and at sea and by GFCM statistical rectangles as defined in Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1.

c. Measures taken to monitor and mitigate impact on marine environment

D) CPCs shall establish a specific monitoring plan for the trawl fisheries operating under derogation as stipulated by point B).

E) These provisions are without prejudice to more detailed or stricter rules implemented by Members.

**Elasmobranchs species under Annex II (list of endangered or threatened species) and Annex III (list of species whose exploitation is regulated) of the SPA/BD Protocol to the Barcelona Convention**

6. CPCs shall ensure a high protection from fishing activities to elasmobranchs species listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD protocol of the Barcelona Convention that must be released unharmed and alive to the extent possible.

7. Specimens of sharks' species listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol cannot be retained on board, transhipped, landed, transferred, stored, sold or displayed or offered for sale.

8. CPCs shall ensure that catches of tope shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*) taken with bottom- set nets, longlines and in tuna traps shall be promptly released unharmed and alive to the extent possible.

**PART III  
Monitoring, data collection and research**

9. CPCs shall ensure that:

a. information on fishing activities, catch data, incidental taking, release and/or discarding events for sharks species listed either in Annex II or III of the SPA/BD Protocol, must be recorded by the ship-owners in the logbook or equivalent document, in line with requirements of Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 establishing the GFCM logbook;

b. this information must be reported to the national authorities for notification to GFCM Secretariat within the annual national reporting to SAC and through the Task 1;

c. any other additional measures are taken to improve data gathering in view of scientific monitoring of the species.

10. As appropriate, the GFCM and its CPCs should, individually and collectively, engage in capacity building efforts and other research cooperative activities to improve knowledge on sharks and sharks fisheries and to support the effective implementation of this recommendation, including entering into cooperative arrangements with other appropriate international bodies.

11. The provisions referred to in Paragraphs 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are without prejudice to stricter rules implemented by the CPCs.

## **Terms of reference for selected activities**

### **Working Group on Small-Scale Fisheries (WGSSF)**

The main objective of the Working Group is to coordinate technical, scientific and socio-economic activities relating to small-scale fisheries in order to fill the main data gaps relating to this sector, to produce advice for consideration and validation by the SAC and WGBS and to support the sustainable management and development of small-scale fisheries within a Blue Growth perspective. To this end, the WGSSF shall:

- Provide advice on the implementation of technical outputs of Target 2 of the mid-term strategy;
- Provide advice on the implementation of technical aspects of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) in the GFCM area of application;
- Promote the use of the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) as a data collection tool for small-scale fisheries;
- Measure the biological and ecological impacts of small-scale fishing activity on fish stocks, particularly for priority species, and on the marine environment;
- Develop indicators to measure the economic and social impacts of small-scale fishing activity on coastal communities in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. Assess the access of small-scale fishers to resources and markets, in light of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.b., and examine the interaction of small-scale fishing with related sectors, particularly fish processing, marine recreational fisheries and tourism;
- Identify interactions between small-scale and recreational fisheries, with a view to assessing potential conflicts, including competition for resources, competition for space and gear interactions.

### **Working Group on Recreational Fisheries (WGRF)**

The main objective of the Working Group is to coordinate technical, scientific and socio-economic activities relating to recreational fisheries in order to fill the main data gaps relating to this sector, to produce advice for consideration and validation by the SAC and WGBS and to support the sustainable management of recreational fisheries within an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries perspective. To this end, the WGRF shall:

- Provide advice on the implementation of technical outputs of Target 2 of the mid-term strategy in relation to recreational fisheries;
- Measure the biological and ecological impacts of marine recreational fishing activity on fish stocks, particularly for priority species, and on the marine environment;
- Measure the socio-economic impact of marine recreational fishing activity on coastal communities in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, including its interaction with related sectors such as tourism and small-scale fisheries;
- Harmonize methodologies for assessing recreational fisheries, towards improved data collection in support of sustainable recreational fisheries management;
- Identify interactions between recreational and small-scale fisheries, with a view to assessing potential conflicts, including competition for resources, competition for space and gear interactions.

## GFCM autonomous budget for 2018

		US (\$)	Share of total %
<b>STAFF</b>	<b>Professional staff (10)</b>	1 518 000	59.95%
	<b>Administrative staff (6)</b>	488 000	19.27%
	<b>TOTAL STAFF</b>	<b>2 006 000</b>	<b>74.73%</b>
<b>FUNCTIONING</b>	Temporary human resources (Security Guards, admin. support, Overtime)	30 000	1.18%
	Consultants (including translators of scientific publications)	20 000	0.79%
	Travel (Staff, Bureau, Coordinators, interpreters, Experts' DSA and tickets)	80 000	3.16%
	Training	10 000	0.39%
	Internal/External services backcharge	100 000	3.95%
	Task force	15 464	0.61%
	<b>TOTAL FUNCTIONING</b>	<b>255 464</b>	<b>10.09%</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL 1 (staff + functioning)</b>		<b>2 261 464</b>	
<b>ANCILLARY</b>	Hospitality and Miscellaneous (1 %)	22 615	
	Participation Fund (2.5 %)	57 102	
	<b>SUBTOTAL 2</b>	<b>2 341 181</b>	
	FAO Support Costs (4.5% of subtotal 2)	105 353	
	<b>SUBTOTAL 3</b>	<b>2 446 534</b>	
	GFCM Working Capital Fund (3.5% of subtotal 3)	85 629	
<b>AUTONOMOUS BUDGET (US Dollars)</b>		<b>2 532 162</b>	

**Contributions to the GFCM budget for 2018  
(based on 2013-2015 averages)**

Contracting party	US \$	%	US \$	Index	US \$	Weighted Total	US \$
Albania	24 075	0.95	11 009	1	6 330	19 938	6 736
Algeria	83 085	3.28	11 009	1	6 330	194 611	65 745
Bulgaria	17 340	0.68	11 009	1	6 330		
Croatia	74 314	2.93	11 009	10	63 304		
Cyprus	74 314	2.93	11 009	10	63 304		
Egypt	84 216	3.33	11 009	1	6 330	197 959	66 876
France	137 617	5.43	11 009	20	126 608		
Greece	74 314	2.93	11 009	10	63 304		
Israel							
Italy	137 617	5.43	11 009	20	126 608		
Japan	137 617	5.43	11 009	20	126 608		
Lebanon	20 854	0.82	11 009	1	6 330	10 403	3 515
Libya	48 423	1.91	11 009	1	6 330	92 010	31 084
Malta	74 314	2.93	11 009	10	63 304		
Monaco	11 009	0.43	11 009				
Montenegro	12 287	0.49	11 009			3 783	1 278
Morocco	40 181	1.59	11 009	1	6 330	67 613	22 842
Romania	17 340	0.68	11 009	1	6 330		
Slovenia	74 314	2.93	11 009	10	63 304		
Spain	74 314	2.93	11 009	10	63 304		
Syria	19 294	0.76	11 009	1	6 330	5 784	1 954
Tunisia	135 782	5.36	11 009	1	6 330	350 599	118 442
Turkey	385 180	15.21	11 009	10	63 304	920 190	310 867
European Union	774 361	30.58	11 009			2 259 579	763 351
		100		140		4 122 470	
	<b>2 532 162</b>		253 216		886 257		1 392 689

<b>Total budget</b>	<b>2 532 162</b>	<b>US \$</b>
Basic fee	10%	of total budget
	253 216	US \$
Number of contracting parties*	<b>23</b>	
Total budget less basic fee	2 278 946	US \$
GDP component	35%	of total budget
	886 257	US \$
Catch component	55%	of total budget
	1 392 689	US \$

\* Contracting parties paying their contributions to the autonomous budget

The forty-first session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean as well as the eighth session of the Committee on Administration and Finance was attended by delegates of 22 contracting parties, as well as of three cooperating non-contracting parties and one non-contracting party. Representatives from 20 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its regional projects as well as the Bureaus of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, were also in attendance.

During the session, the progress in the implementation of the mid-term strategy was reviewed, including in relation to the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration. Moreover, cooperation activities within the framework of agreements with contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties and with partner organizations were discussed. In light of its increasing cooperation with the GFCM, the Commission granted cooperating non-contracting party status to the Republic of Moldova.

In relation to the management of fisheries and aquaculture in the GFCM area of application, a total of eight binding recommendations were adopted, dealing with the following issues; reporting of aquaculture data and information; management of blackspot seabream fisheries in the Alboran Sea; establishment of a fisheries restricted area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit (Adriatic Sea); multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea; establishment of a regional adaptive management plan for the exploitation of red coral in the Mediterranean; submission of data on fishing activities in the GFCM area of application; a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application and an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside the waters under national jurisdiction in the Strait of Sicily. Furthermore, the Commission adopted six resolutions including: a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture; guidelines for the streamlining of aquaculture authorization and leasing processes; the reactivation of the Working Group on Fishing Technology; a permanent working group on vulnerable marine ecosystems; a network of essential fish habitats and the application of an International Maritime Organization number.

Finally, the Commission adopted its programme of work for the next intersession and approved its budget amounting to US\$2 532 162 for 2018 as well as a number of strategic actions to be funded through extrabudgetary resources. It also unanimously endorsed the renewed Bureaus of the Committee on Administration and Finance, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture, the Working Group on the Black Sea and the Compliance Committee.

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