

## **A decisive step towards enhanced regional cooperation for the management of Black Sea fisheries**

### **PRESS RELEASE**



**Tbilisi, Georgia.** The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (GFCM/FAO) concluded yesterday the fourth annual meeting of its Working Group on the Black Sea. The meeting was hosted by Georgia, one of the three Black Sea riparian States not yet Members of the GFCM – the other two being the Russian Federation and the Ukraine.

Against the backdrop of the numerous challenges facing the conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources, it is increasingly essential to pursue concerted efforts both in fisheries management and in aquaculture development. This is of particular significance in areas such as the Black Sea. As Ms Maya Bitadze, Georgian Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, highlighted, this event was instrumental in boosting cooperation between Black Sea riparian states towards the responsible management of fisheries resources and sustainable aquaculture. The working group meeting renewed and reinforced GFCM and FAO's commitment to achieve this objective. The event was marked by the receipt of formal requests by Georgia and the Ukraine to become "cooperating non-Contracting Parties" within the GFCM. This represents a historical milestone since it effectively paves the way forward towards their full membership and towards the achievement of a level playing field throughout the Black Sea region.

The meeting also presented an important opportunity for all participating countries to discuss key issues related to the main Black Sea commercial fisheries – including turbot and small pelagic species – and endorse sound scientific advice regarding their status and management. Other important topics such as the development of regional management plans to recover and protect the most vulnerable resources, and combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing were also covered. In light of the major role that aquaculture is called upon to play for

food security, employment and economic development, the group welcomed the creation of the GFCM Aquaculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform, citing it as an innovative tool for working towards the sustainable development of this sector. “The outcomes of this meeting bear a particular significance in light of the FAO Blue Growth Initiative to promote sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sector” said Ms Iamze Mirazanashvili, from the FAO Representation in Georgia.

Participants left the meeting feeling confident that the foundations had been laid for strengthening the existing framework for dialogue and cooperation in the Black Sea basin and pursuing efforts to consolidate the synergies in place. “I trust that all the Members of our Commission will build on this momentum to move ahead towards more visible and concrete action” concluded Mr Abdellah Srour, Executive Secretary of the GFCM.