



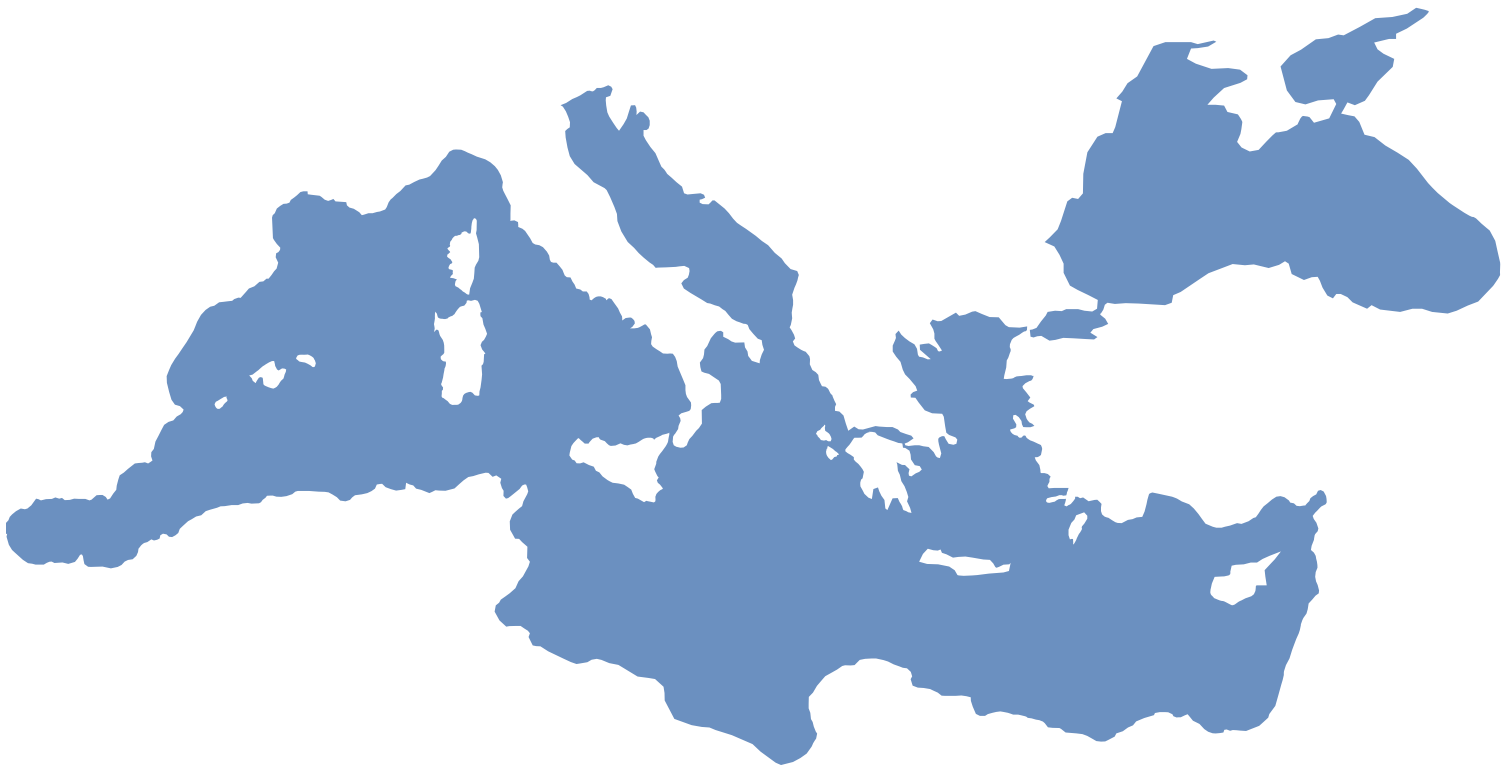
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United Nations**



**General Fisheries Commission
for the Mediterranean
Commission générale des pêches
pour la Méditerranée**

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GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN



Report of the forty-second session

FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy, 22–26 October 2018

42

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REPORT OF THE FORTY-SECOND SESSION

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PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is the final version of the report adopted in December 2018 by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean at its forty-second session at FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy.

ABSTRACT

The forty-second session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean as well as the ninth session of the Committee on Administration and Finance was attended by delegates of 22 contracting parties, as well as of four cooperating non-contracting parties and two non-contracting parties. Representatives from 15 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, progress in activities related to fisheries, aquaculture, compliance and other strategic activities was reviewed. 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 increasing cooperation with the GFCM, the Commission granted cooperating non-contracting party status to Jordan.

In relation to the management of fisheries and aquaculture in the GFCM area of application, a total of eleven binding recommendations were adopted, dealing with the following issues: multiannual management plans for European eel, for deep-water red shrimp fisheries in the Levant and Ionian Seas and for demersal fisheries in the Strait of Sicily; conservation of sharks and rays; international joint inspection and surveillance in the Strait of Sicily; regional research programmes on blue crab in the Mediterranean and on rapa whelk fisheries in the Black Sea; further emergency measures for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea; access to information and data related to monitoring, control and surveillance and regional marking of fishing gear. Furthermore, the Commission agreed to launch its second performance review in 2019 and welcomed the establishment of five subregional technical units in Bulgaria, Croatia, Lebanon, Spain and Tunisia.

Finally, the Commission adopted its programme of work for the next intersession and approved its budget amounting to USD 2 537 241 for 2019 as well as a number of strategic actions to be funded through extrabudgetary resources. It also unanimously endorsed the new Bureaus of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries, the Working Group on the Black Sea and the Committee on Administration and Finance. Finally, on the occasion of its resumed session held in December 2018, the Commission unanimously elected its new Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons.

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OPENING AND ARRANGEMENTS OF THE SESSION

1. The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) held its forty-second session as well as the ninth session of its Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF) at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) headquarters, Rome, Italy, from 22 to 26 October 2018. Attendants included delegates from 22 contracting parties, four cooperating non-contracting parties and two non-contracting parties as well as observers, among which representatives from 15 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, FAO and its four 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 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, and acknowledged that the GFCM was becoming a leader in spearheading FAO initiatives at the regional level. He referred to the importance of the recent high-level declarations, particularly the Ministerial Declaration on a Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (RPOA-SSF). Finally, he underlined the key role for the GFCM to play in ensuring sustainable livelihoods in the region.
3. Mr Stefano Cataudella, GFCM Chairperson, highlighted the significant achievements made by the Commission in the past ten years, such as enhanced cooperation in the Black Sea, political will garnered for small-scale fisheries (SSF) and the systematic involvement of stakeholders within a participatory approach. The Chairperson noted that the GFCM had become a platform for stakeholder interaction and engagement with decision-making processes, including in the context of the fisheries and aquaculture strategies that had been adopted. He urged for more efforts to be made in formulating independent scientific advice towards reverting the alarming trend in stock status.
4. The delegate of the European Union (EU [Member organization]) expressed her satisfaction for the recent adoption of ministerial declarations for the Black Sea and SSF, noting however that renewed political commitment needed to be backed up by clear management and conservation achievements. Similarly, sound advice was coming from the GFCM subsidiary bodies which had to be transposed into new binding measures. The EU strongly supported the work of the GFCM in capacity-building, underlining that enhanced cooperation would underpin the implementation of these declarations.
5. The delegate of Morocco emphasized the important work of the GFCM on issues such as SSF and the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Morocco noted its ongoing national strategy was fully aligned with regional priorities, and the execution of the letter of agreement (LoA) signed with the GFCM would further support this alignment.
6. The delegate of Tunisia thanked the GFCM for its increasing efforts towards sound fisheries management and sustainable aquaculture development. As some conservation goals were far from being met, he urged the Commission to prioritize its work, including at the subregional level.
7. The delegate of Algeria emphasized the growing political commitment to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. At the national level, Algeria was fostering a participatory approach in the context of a national strategy consistent with GFCM objectives, in particular concerning SSF.
8. The full text of opening addresses is provided in their original language in Appendix 4.

9. Following these addresses, Mr Abdellah Srour, GFCM Executive Secretary, introduced delegations and observers, provided information on the arrangements for the meeting and reported on credentials.

10. The Commission was informed about the statement of competence and voting rights by the EU and its Member States. The agenda was adopted with minor changes, as attached in Appendix 1. All documents available to the Commission are listed in Appendix 3.

PROGRESS ON COOPERATION MATTERS

11. On the basis of document GFCM:42/2018/Inf.5, the GFCM Secretariat reported on cooperation issues, including with countries in the remit of LoA. 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) with partner organizations.

12. The delegates of Albania and Tunisia referred to the implementation of LoA with the GFCM and to how these were contributing to supporting their countries. The importance of annual consultations and progressive reports on the status of LoA was underlined.

13. The delegate of Algeria thanked the GFCM for its readiness to provide technical assistance to her country and reported that her country would soon sign an LoA.

14. The delegate of Moldova stressed the importance of cooperation with the GFCM. Following the signature of the Sofia Declaration by her country, she reported that Moldova had prioritized key areas where further work was necessary, with a view to meeting the targets of this declaration.

15. The delegate of Ukraine stressed the importance of cooperation in matters relating to Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture. His country had become a cooperating non-contracting party to the GFCM, given the importance it attached to these matters. He urged the Commission to be in strict compliance with the principles of international law and provisions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution on territorial integrity of Ukraine, including by acknowledging the illegal nature of fishing activities by the Russian Federation in the Crimean region, as full-fledged cooperation would only be possible after the end of the occupation of this region and the restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

16. The delegate of the Russian Federation emphasized that political issues were not within the competence of the GFCM and proposed that these be settled on a bilateral basis or within the framework of relevant international organizations. He stated that only UNGA resolutions relating to sustainable fisheries had relevance in the context of the work of the Commission.

17. The delegate of Jordan recalled that his country sought cooperating non-contracting party status with the GFCM with a view to promoting aquaculture development. He hoped that such status would be granted.

18. The Commission unanimously agreed to grant cooperating non-contracting party status to Jordan. It also invited relevant countries to enter into an LoA with the GFCM towards the provision of technical assistance.

19. The importance for the GFCM Secretariat to remain abreast and inform the Commission of relevant international and regional developments, including the ongoing negotiations for a legally-binding agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), was underlined.

20. Several partner organizations, including the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), the International Organisation for the Development of Fisheries in Eastern and Central Europe (Eurofish), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Oceana, OceanCare, the Shark Trust and the United Nations Environment Programme – Mediterranean Action Plan (UN Environment-MAP), intervened to praise cooperative efforts with the GFCM, including in the context of MoUs in place. The full text of the statements by partner organizations is provided in their original language in Appendix 4.

21. In line with the decision taken at its previous session, the Commission signed a MoU with AOAD, aimed at jointly working on activities linked, among others, to data collection, small-scale fisheries and aquaculture. The Commission expressed satisfaction for the efforts made to promote cooperation at large, including via new MoUs to be signed during the intersession with organizations willing to formalize ongoing cooperation (i.e. Black Sea Advisory Council [BISAC] and Low Impact Fishers of Europe [LIFE]). It also instructed the Secretariat to update relevant MoUs (IUCN, UN Environment-MAP and World Wide Fund for Nature [WWF]).

REPORT ON FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES IN 2017–2018

Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture

22. The GFCM Secretariat, on behalf of Mr Ramón De La Figuera Morales, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ), presented the intersessional activities based on documents GFCM:42/2018/3 and GFCM:42/2018/Inf.10. These included the operationalization of the strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture, the activities of the aquaculture demonstrative centres (ADC) in the Black Sea and other activities related to market, governance and aquatic animal health.

23. The delegate of Tunisia expressed his appreciation to the GFCM for the support provided towards the pilot action to establish allocated zones for aquaculture (AZA) in the Bay of Monastir, noting that results could potentially serve as an example for the region, and underlined the willingness of his country to bring this pilot action to fruition. Furthermore, he asked the assistance of the GFCM towards the next steps, including guidance on the introduction of alien species with a view to taking precautionary action and avoiding adverse effects on local species.

24. The delegate of the EU congratulated the CAQ on the work carried out towards the implementation of the aquaculture strategy, stressing the need for further efforts to enhance the governance component. She underlined that the list of indicators to follow progress on the strategy was an important step towards effectiveness.

25. The delegations of Algeria, Lebanon, Montenegro and Morocco underlined the important role of aquaculture within their national strategies as well as the effective work of the GFCM in mobilizing support for aquaculture development and monitoring. In particular, the delegates of Lebanon and Montenegro asked for support with regard to spatial planning for aquaculture and the latter acknowledged the successful cooperation with the AdriaMed regional project on aquaculture monitoring.

26. The representative of IUCN highlighted that his organization was committed to sustainable aquaculture development through environmental conservation within a blue economy context and hoped to continue collaboration with the CAQ.

27. The representative of Eurofish recalled the ongoing MoU with the GFCM and cooperation undertaken so far, in particular on aquaculture market issues. She informed the Commission about a conference on market and technology innovation, to be held in Italy in 2019, and invited the GFCM to collaborate in this initiative.

28. The Commission commended the work carried out by the CAQ during the intersession with a view to operationalizing the aquaculture strategy.

Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries

29. Mr Othman Jarboui, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC), presented the intersessional activities based on documents GFCM:42/2018/2 and GFCM:42/2018/Inf.9. He referred in particular to regional and subregional activities in the fields of stock assessment, marine environment and ecosystems, data collection, small-scale and recreational fisheries as well as the assessment of IUU fishing.

30. The delegate of Algeria underlined the significant efforts made by her country towards improving statistical data collection, further strengthened by the support of the GFCM, the FAO regional projects and the European Commission.

31. The delegate of Morocco acknowledged the success of the subregional approach in earmarking priority actions for countries involved in the shared management of resources. In recalling that his country had aligned national plans of action with the mid-term strategy, he referred to the work underway with the GFCM to implement a joint survey on demersal species, the socio-economic survey and the roadmap for blackspot seabream, which included reinforced biological sampling towards a comprehensive adaptive management plan for the species. He also referred to the ambitious project on bycatch of vulnerable species, carried out jointly with GFCM and other partners, expressing his confidence it would produce important results.

32. The delegate of Egypt commended the cooperation between the GFCM and the FAO regional projects, noting that it permitted progress on numerous key topics. Similarly, cooperation with environmental organizations had been encouraging.

33. The delegate of the EU added her voice in recognizing progress within SAC, noting that a record had been set for the number of stocks assessed. Despite such progress, she called for a multiplication of efforts on priority species towards addressing the targets in the MedFish4Ever Declaration. She further underlined the important headway made towards refining existing multiannual management plans (e.g. for blackspot seabream in the western Mediterranean) and stressed the importance of developing one for deep-water red shrimps in the eastern Mediterranean, following the collection of necessary data via a research programme. With regard to the Jabuka/Pomo Pit in the Adriatic Sea, she highlighted the need to control fishing activities and to study the effect of measures in place. Finally, she encouraged the SAC to continue setting up protected areas, in areas such as the Bari and Otranto canyons.

34. The delegate of Tunisia echoed the positive remarks on the work of SAC in making the best use of available data to manage stocks via multiannual management plans. He remarked that the status of many priority species should be addressed also focusing on technological gear aspects and considering their inclusion in management plans.

35. The representative of OceanCare drew the attention of the Commission to the negative impacts of ocean noise on marine living resources, which was increasingly recognized also in the context of the

FAO COFI and UN General Assembly. She asked the SAC to support work on this issue, mentioning OceanCare stood ready to cooperate.

36. The representative of IUCN encouraged the GFCM to continue its work on biodiversity conservation by linking the processes of designation of fisheries restricted areas (FRAs), vulnerable marine ecosystem (VMEs) and socially protected areas of Mediterranean interest (SPAMIs) in order to progress toward a networks of marine protected areas (MPAs) and other area-based fisheries management measures.

37. The Commission recognized the relevance of the subregional approach as subregional committees and ad hoc technical groups had improved the quality of scientific advice. The importance of stepping up the work of the SAC in support of multiannual management plans was stressed too.

Working Group on the Black Sea

38. Mr Simion Nicolaev, Coordinator of the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS), presented the intersessional activities on the basis of documents GFCM:42/2018/2 and GFCM:42/2018/Inf.7. He outlined the main elements of the BlackSea4Fish project as well as actions already implemented during the first year, and presented the advice in support of management.

39. The delegate of the EU praised the work carried out within the context of WGBS and the contribution by national experts through the BlackSea4Fish project. She referred to the recent adoption of the Sofia Declaration and the different targets therein, including increased work for the evaluation of stocks in the basin.

40. Following a request for clarification by the delegate of Romania, the ongoing progress towards the establishment of an aquaculture demonstrative centre in his country was outlined, noting that this would significantly support the dissemination of best practices in the region.

Compliance Committee

41. Mr Randall Caruana, Chairperson of the Compliance Committee (CoC), cursorily highlighted compliance-related activities carried out during the intersession on the basis of documents GFCM:42/2018/4 and GFCM:42/2018/Inf.8. In particular, he reported progress made on the fight against IUU fishing and on vessel monitoring system (VMS).

42. The Commission acknowledged with satisfaction the important progress made in the context of the CoC.

Other strategic activities

43. The GFCM Secretariat reported on progress of select strategic activities, including advances towards the organization of the Forum on Fisheries Science in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (Fish Forum), the forthcoming edition of the State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries (SoMFi 2018) as well as the actions within the RPOA-SSF.

44. The delegate of the EU welcomed the interest in the Fish Forum and noted that this event should be seen as a forum of scientific work that should produce clear and operational conclusions, including future working methodologies.

45. The GFCM Chairperson expressed his hope that the Fish Forum would contribute to defining a roadmap to improve the quality of science in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, and called upon

contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) to reinforce the role of science in decision-making at all levels.

46. The delegate of the EU also recalled the path to the RPOA-SSF and stressed that, while it was important to acknowledge progress made, there was a need to demonstrate swift advances in implementing actions with tangible results for fishers. She noted though that progress was underway, including the planning of a conference on social development in the intersession.

MANAGEMENT OF MEDITERRANEAN AND BLACK SEA FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

Aquaculture advice

47. The GFCM Secretariat, on behalf of the Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ), in recalling the biennial nature of the CAQ sessions, presented the main conclusions and advice emanating from its subsidiary bodies on the basis of documents GFCM:42/2018/3, GFCM:42/2018/Inf.10 and GFCM:42/2018/Inf.12, touching also on the main pillars of the aquaculture strategy.

48. On the basis of their success in the Black Sea, the Commission endorsed the establishment of additional ADC units in several areas of the Mediterranean, noting that such replication would also enhance the exchange of experience between the two basins. The Commission also agreed to widen the beneficiaries of ADC activities to include technicians, administrators, the private sector (especially small-scale producers), existing and potential investors and others.

49. The Commission supported the establishment of a regional framework on the introduction of alien species and translocation of locally absent species for their use in aquaculture, as well as on escapees and restocking to minimize risks to ecosystems and natural habitats.

50. Finally, the Commission acknowledged the need to use risk analysis in Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture as a management tool to support actions on biosecurity, including setting up surveillance plans to identify the arrival and spread of disease.

Fisheries management and conservation advice

51. The SAC Chairperson and the WGBS Coordinator, on the basis of documents GFCM:42/2018/2, GFCM:42/2018/Inf.7 and GFCM:42/2018/Inf.9, 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.

52. Following an extensive discussion, the Commission reached the following decisions and adopted the following recommendations:

European eel

53. In light of the critical status of the European eel stock in the Mediterranean, the Commission acknowledged the need to take action. In this respect, the delegate of the EU, jointly with Algeria and Tunisia, introduced a proposal on a multiannual management plan for European eel in the Mediterranean. The aim of this proposal was to rebuild the stock through a two-step approach, whereby basic management measures (fishing authorizations, reporting of landings, catch reductions, temporal closures) would be implemented, national programmes set up and a research project launched, and management measures would then be consolidated for the future. The delegate of the EU underlined

that the scope of the proposal covered marine, brackish and transitional fresh waters of the entire Mediterranean.

54. The delegate of Egypt expressed his concern with respect to management measures for European eel in Egyptian lakes, where there was an unrecorded number of fishing vessels using diverse fishing gear and techniques without a strict control of fishing effort; in this context, several years would be needed before implementing any management plan. He explained that, however, national legislation was being enhanced so that it could be aligned with the general and specific objectives of the proposed multiannual management plans.

55. The delegate of Turkey recalled that her country had implemented several management measures to ensure the sustainability of European eel fisheries, including size restrictions, effectively imposing a control on total catches in her country.

56. The GFCM Secretariat was invited to communicate to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) relevant information in relation to the preservation of European eel and to ongoing efforts by the GFCM.

57. After extensive discussions between the delegates of Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey, the delegate of Egypt suggested a progressive implementation of the management measures from 2019.

58. Following some amendments taking into account comments made, the Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1 on a multiannual management plan for European eel in the Mediterranean Sea, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 5.

Red coral

59. In relation to red coral and to Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/5, the SAC Chairperson noted that since no information had been submitted by CPCs on the use of remotely operated vehicles (ROV), the SAC was not in a position to provide advice as required by the recommendation.

60. The delegates of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia voiced the interest of their countries in using ROV to assess the status of the resource, from 2019.

61. In recalling the provisions of the recommendation, the Commission highlighted the importance of advancing as much as possible during the next intersession towards obtaining relevant data and information on red coral. It agreed that this would be done, *inter alia*, through the launch of a research programme in line with the elements provided by the SAC, instead of a call for tenders as originally included in the recommendation. The Commission also agreed on the importance of reporting the work carried out and related advances to relevant bodies, such as CITES.

Vulnerable marine ecosystems

62. The SAC Chairperson recalled the work done on VMEs during the intersession, which had resulted in advice to adopt elements for the protection of VMEs, including the establishment of a VME encounter reporting protocol, the mapping of existing bottom deep-sea fishing footprint and the establishment of an exploratory deep-sea bottom fishing reporting protocol.

63. The delegate of the EU, echoed by Egypt, acknowledged the importance of continuing the work focusing on the establishment of FRAs and their proper implementation and control.

64. In relation to ongoing regional efforts to establish FRAs, the delegate of Morocco highlighted that a large number of protected areas were already being established at the national level. He requested support in ensuring these MPAs were accounted for against the target of 10 percent of protected coastal and marine areas (Aichi Target 11).

65. The Commission endorsed the proposed VME and exploratory fishing reporting protocols, as well as the elements towards the mapping of bottom deep-sea footprint as included in Appendix 17.

Shark fisheries

66. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal for an amendment to Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/3 on fisheries management measures for conservation of sharks and rays in the GFCM area of application.

67. The delegate of Morocco fully supported the proposal as conducive to the sustainable exploitation of sharks and rays in the region. He, nevertheless, requested a waiver on the prohibition to fish within three nautical miles, based on the premises that Morocco had established a coastal zonation that allowed some fishing in particular areas within this distance from the coast.

68. The delegate of the EU pointed out that the text of the proposal also provided the grounds for specific and spatially limited derogations.

69. The Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/2 on fisheries management measures for the conservation of sharks and rays in the GFCM area of application, amending Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/3, as reproduced under Appendix 6.

Deep-water red shrimp fisheries in the eastern-central Mediterranean

70. The delegate of the EU introduced two proposals for the establishment of multiannual management plans for sustainable trawling activities for deep-water red shrimps in the eastern and central Mediterranean. She underlined that identical plans were being proposed for the two areas to promote a precautionary approach for the management of these two important species. Similar to measures proposed for other fisheries, these were based on a two-step approach, with the progressive implementation of basic management measures (fishing authorizations), identification of fishing grounds, data collection and pilot inspection schemes in the high seas in a first phase, followed by the definition and proposal of more permanent measures based on the outcomes in a second phase.

71. The delegate of Egypt stressed that it was important to manage this resource but that a first step should consist in the implementation of fishing authorizations and be followed by a one-year programme to study the stock with a view to developing new measures. The delegates of Egypt and Turkey explained that there was no list of authorized vessels for red shrimp yet and that this should be prepared during the next year.

72. In the ensuing discussion, the delegate of the EU clarified the main steps of the management plan, which included a first stage where transitional precautionary measures such as authorized list of vessels would be implemented pending a more precise advice from the SAC; after this, permanent measures should be adopted based on the scientific advice. The Commission noted that Egypt and Turkey might experience difficulties in implementing the measures concerning the reference period 2014–2017 foreseen in paragraph 11 of the proposal.

73. The representative of Oceana welcomed the proposals and stressed the need for a systematic protection of nurseries rather than a complementary measure under multiannual management plans. She

also recalled the commitment to establish a network of essential fish habitats by 2018, in line with the MedFish4Ever Declaration and with Resolution GFCM/41/2017/5 on a network of essential fish habitats in the GFCM area of application.

74. The Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/3 on a multiannual management plan for sustainable trawl fisheries targeting giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Levant Sea (geographical subareas 24, 25, 26 and 27), as reproduced under Appendix 7, as well as Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/4 on a multiannual management plan for sustainable trawl fisheries targeting giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Ionian Sea (geographical subareas 19, 20 and 21), as reproduced under Appendix 8.

Demersal fisheries in the central Mediterranean

75. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal on the establishment of a multiannual management plan for bottom trawl fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily. She underlined that it repealed and brought together Recommendations GFCM/39/2015/2 and GFCM/40/2016/4, by simplifying the scope and making the recommendation applicable irrespective of the composition by species in the catch.

76. The delegate of Tunisia, echoed by the EU and the WWF, underlined the importance of improving gear selectivity, including through grids and panels, and promoting the reduction of discards. The delegate of the EU proposed that gear selectivity become a priority of the MedSudMed regional project, with outcomes to be reported and integrated with the advice provided by the Working Group on Fishing Technology (WGFiT).

77. Following some amendments taking into account the comments of Tunisia, the Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/5 on a multiannual management plan for bottom trawl fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16), repealing Recommendations GFCM/39/2015/2 and GFCM/40/2016/4, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 9.

78. The delegate of the EU also introduced a proposal amending 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).

79. The representative of MedReact, on behalf of Greenpeace Italy, remarked that the establishment, in 2016, of FRAs protecting three nursery areas in the Strait of Sicily had been followed by an increase of bottom trawl fisheries in these areas compared to the year before their adoption. She further underlined that, if this problem of compliance by CPCs was not urgently addressed, the efficacy and credibility of the GFCM multiannual management plans would be questioned.

80. The Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/6 on an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside the waters under national jurisdiction in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16) amending Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/8, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 10.

Blue crab in the central Mediterranean

81. The delegate of the EU introduced, with Tunisia, a proposal for the establishment of a regional research programme and for transitional measures for blue crab (*Portunus segnis*) in the central Mediterranean. She underlined that more research was needed on this Lessepsian species to better understand its impacts on ecosystems and on fisheries, in particular small-scale fisheries. She also

remarked that a second non-indigenous species (NIS) of Atlantic origin, *Callinectes sapidus*, was present and had significant effects in the western Mediterranean and proposed to include it in the recommendation.

82. The delegate of Tunisia, echoed by the delegates of Egypt and the EU, as well as IUCN, stressed the importance of early intervention in the case of NIS, proposing to establish a monitoring network on NIS at a regional scale, for which the mandate, structure and functioning had to be clearly defined. In this context, the GFCM Secretariat recalled that joint activities between the GFCM and UN Environment-MAP had led to the establishment of a pilot monitoring plan for NIS in the eastern Mediterranean and that the Subregional Committee for the Central Mediterranean (SRC-CM) had proposed to extend this monitoring plan to the central Mediterranean; the plan and the proposal had been endorsed by the SAC.

83. The Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/7 on a regional research programme on blue crab in the Mediterranean Sea, addressing both *Portunus segnis* and *Callinectes sapidus*, as reproduced under Appendix 11. In addition, the Commission agreed on establishing a monitoring network, expanding the one created during the pilot project in the eastern Mediterranean. The network would make use of existing databases and observation platforms, including the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) and the MAP Marine Mediterranean Invasive Alien Species (MAMIAS) database, as well as planned surveys-at-sea. Coordination with the MAP on how to operationalize the network and produce advice useful for both organizations should be pursued during the intersession, in line with the existing MoU.

Demersal fisheries in the Adriatic Sea

84. The Commission was reminded of the poor status of Adriatic demersal resources and of the importance of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA for protecting European hake juveniles in the subregion. A scientific monitoring programme had been drafted to help the SAC assess the effectiveness of the FRA and, in this respect, the importance of effective collaboration between scientists was underlined.

85. The delegate of the EU highlighted the role of the AdriaMed regional project in this context, recalling that the reactivation of the Working Group on Marine Protected Areas (WGMMA) would be an ideal forum to discuss the results obtained by this programme in particular and for all FRAs in general.

86. The representative of MEDAC informed that it had created an ad hoc working group on the Jabuka/Pomo Pit to find a co-management system between scientists, stakeholders and administrations. The coordinator of the AdriaMed regional project also pointed out that meetings, data collection and preliminary work to evaluate the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA had been carried out and results would be presented to SAC subsidiary bodies.

Small pelagic fisheries in the Adriatic Sea

87. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal on further emergency measures for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (geographic sub-areas [GSAs] 17 and 18). She recalled that current emergency measures were expiring and that the dire situation of the stocks, anchovy in particular, required the establishment of further measures. The proposal therefore included a new reduction in catch levels, a freeze of fishing effort, further spatial and temporal closures as well as strengthened advice and the establishment of an inspection programme. She finally underlined that these measures would have to be implemented as of 1 January 2019.

88. The delegate of Albania noted that Albania was a small country where fisheries were developing and characterized by low catches, fishing effort and fishing capacity and where the processing industry was currently being strengthened, thus providing numerous jobs. He further underlined that most of the measures in the EU proposal had already been transposed into national legislation and that Albania supported the proposal.

89. The delegate of Montenegro remarked that most spatial and temporal emergency measures in the proposal had already been adopted by her country and that integrating additional measures would not pose any difficulty. Regarding the catch limit, she noted that, due to a lack of valid catch statistics for 2014, Montenegro would not be able to implement a catch limit based on 2014 catches. Considering that the share of small pelagic catches of Montenegro was less than 1 percent of total small pelagic catches in the Adriatic, she requested the recommendation take into account the specificities of her country and be adapted accordingly.

90. Following amendments based on comments by Albania and Montenegro, the Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/8 on further emergency measures in 2019–2021 for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subareas 17 and 18), as reproduced under Appendix 12.

91. The representative of the WWF remarked that the adoption of this recommendation was important and timely considering the current status of these resources. She further underlined that WWF supported a yearly 5 percent reduction in catches based on 2014 catches, in line with available scientific advice.

Blackspot seabream in the western Mediterranean

92. The Commission discussed the pending proposal on the establishment of a minimum conservation reference size for blackspot seabream in the Mediterranean, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 16.

93. The delegate of Morocco highlighted that her country as well as Spain were working on the collection and analysis of information on this fishery, including on the biological aspects of the species. She remarked that this information should be analysed in detail in order to obtain a robust estimate of the minimum conservation reference size. In this regard, it was agreed that the SAC would provide advice on the minimum conservation reference size in 2019.

94. The GFCM Executive Secretary, in connection with discussions on the blackspot seabream stock in the Alboran Sea, drew the attention of CPCs to issues relating to the western limit of the GFCM area of application. He recalled that the GFCM Secretariat had been instructed to seek the advice of the FAO Legal Office regarding the precise delimitations of this area, in particular the boundary with the Atlantic Ocean. He reported that the FAO Legal Office had confirmed that the GFCM Agreement did not expressly exclude the Strait of Gibraltar from the GFCM area of application. However, the Commission, through Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/2, had set up GSAs based on the limits of FAO Statistical Area 37. In light of this, the FAO Legal Office suggested that contracting parties clarify the western limit of the GFCM area of application either by amending the GFCM Agreement, by amending Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/2 or by providing a geographic rationale for the management of blackspot seabream within the relevant management plan. Regarding the existing mandates of competent regional fishery bodies in this area, particularly the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF), a portion of the Strait of Gibraltar currently could either fall under the mandate of the GFCM or not fall under any management mandate. This portion being the southern one extending beyond the western limit of

FAO Statistical Area 37 to the line joining Cape Spartel and Cape Trafalgar adjacent to the coast of Morocco.

95. The delegate of Morocco shared the opinion that the GFCM Agreement did not explicitly determine the western limit of the GFCM area of application. However, the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) had defined the Mediterranean Sea on the basis of a western limit represented by the line joining Cape Spartel and Cape Trafalgar, i.e. beyond the limit of FAO Statistical Area 37. She explained that in management terms her country considered this boundary (Cape Spartel) as the management boundary for blackspot seabream. She added that a similar approach was used for the management of swordfish in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

96. The delegate of the EU was in favour of maintaining the current delimitation of the GFCM area of application in line with existing GSAs and FAO statistical divisions, as it was also in line with EU rules in the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) as well as with the competence of other international organizations. She suggested to postpone any decision on this issue to the next session of the Commission.

97. The delegate of Morocco was concerned that the GFCM might adopt a management plan in an area that would not be fully covered by its mandate nor by the mandate of any other competent regional fishery body. She clarified that, for Morocco, the entire Strait of Gibraltar was included in the GFCM area of application for scientific purposes and, on those terms, Morocco would undertake activities for scientific purposes considering Cape Spartel as the western limit of the area.

98. The Commission, having regard also to the launching of a second performance review, agreed that the issue would be reported to the next annual session with a view to determining the western limit of the GFCM area of application.

Rapa whelk in the Black Sea

99. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal on a research programme for rapa whelk in the Black Sea. Acknowledging the conservation measures applied individually by CPCs, she underlined the importance of having a set of common conservation measures developed with all CPCs and validated by the WGBS.

100. The delegate of Turkey welcomed the proposal, underlining the negative impact of rapa whelk fisheries on other demersal resources and suggesting to establish a temporal fishing closure in order to protect such demersal species.

101. Following discussions, delegates agreed to focus on collecting information and improving advice. The Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/9 on a regional research programme for rapa whelk fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29), as reproduced under Appendix 13.

Small-scale and recreational fisheries

102. The SAC Chairperson recalled a proposal on measures concerning recreational fishing in the Mediterranean was pending from the forty-first session of the Commission. The delegate of the EU noted that the current proposal was not adapted to the present situation in the region; she proposed instead to continue working to pilot the draft handbook on recreational fisheries in light of the advice of the SAC and to eventually adopt a new recommendation, given the impact of these activities.

103. The delegates of Lebanon, Morocco and Turkey also agreed to devote further efforts to building knowledge on recreational fishing, testing proposed methodologies and providing advice on monitoring measures. In particular, the delegate of Turkey noted her country's comprehensive rules for recreational fishing and willingness to share expertise.

104. The SAC Chairperson recalled the role of the Commission in supporting the implementation of the RPOA-SSF, including by defining targets and a timeline. The GFCM Chairperson noted that implementing the RPOA-SSF was a complex process that would require to closely consider existing work and analyse needs, also in line with partner organizations.

105. The delegates of Algeria, the EU and Morocco all noted their support for determining a timeline, including short-term and mid-term priorities, for the implementation of the RPOA-SSF in order to move forward in an efficient and effective fashion.

Data collection and quality indicators

106. The Commission decided to extend the feasibility phase for the implementation of quality indicators (timeliness, completeness, conformity, stability and consistency) on fisheries data transmitted by all CPCs through the DCRF online platform, in line with Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/6. This feasibility phase would take place during the next intersession, in view of regularly applying these data quality indicators in the future.

Illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing

107. The Commission endorsed the work plan for the estimation/quantification of IUU fishing, including the survey towards facilitating the estimation of IUU fishing in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, and agreed that the first three activities of the work plan should be carried out. Based on their outcomes, the SAC, in cooperation with the CoC as appropriate, would advise on additional activities needed to complete the estimation.

Other issues relevant for fisheries management

108. Based on the discussions within the framework of the SAC, the WGBS and their subsidiary bodies, an updated table of priority species for the provision of advice was presented and discussed.

109. The delegate of Tunisia underlined the importance of common octopus and spiny lobster for small-scale fisheries in Tunisian waters. He remarked the need to assess stock status and adopt management measures for these species in the future, encouraging the Commission to consider including them in the new list of priority species. The Commission acknowledged the importance of these two species and suggested the issue be reconsidered during the next annual session, following discussions within the SAC and its subsidiary bodies.

110. The delegate of Morocco stressed that dolphinfish should not be considered a priority species for the western Mediterranean. In this respect, the GFCM Secretariat reminded the Commission that Recommendation GFCM/30/2006/2 on the establishment of a closed season for common dolphinfish fisheries using fish aggregating devices applied to any fleet fishing dolphinfish and required that information on catches for these fisheries be submitted.

111. The Commission adopted a revised table of priority species as attached in Appendix 18.

112. In concluding discussions on fisheries management advice, the delegate of Libya requested tailored technical assistance on the subject, in particular in light of the present situation of his country.

The delegates of Algeria, Egypt, the EU, Morocco and Tunisia expressed their support. The delegate of Lebanon mentioned the positive experience of the “Concerted action for Lebanon” initiative encouraging Libya to follow a similar process. In light of this, the Commission decided to proceed along these lines and invited the GFCM Secretariat to follow up on the issue, including through an inception meeting aimed at defining the elements of a roadmap for technical assistance.

Advice on compliance issues

113. The CoC Chairperson outlined the advice stemming from the Committee relevant to fisheries management, which had led to the presentation of proposals for decisions that would underpin the work of the Commission in complying with measures in place.

114. On the basis of document GFCM/42/2018/7, it was recalled that, following the adoption of Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/6 on the submission of data on fishing activities and Resolution GFCM/41/2017/6 on the application of an International Maritime Organization (IMO) number, the CoC, at its twelfth session, agreed on the need to align certain data fields in previously adopted GFCM decisions with new data requirements.

115. The Commission agreed to align the relevant data fields within these decisions with the new data requirements.

116. The delegate of the EU introduced a proposal on access to information and data related to monitoring, control and surveillance within the framework of joint inspection and surveillance schemes. She referred to the fact that there had been interactions between the GFCM Secretariat and CPCs which should be improved in the context of the implementation of these schemes, including by establishing lists of authorized fishing vessels. She clarified that this proposal foresaw the submission of information only on a voluntary basis, when the flag state agreed, and in the context of inspection schemes in place.

117. The Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/10 on access to information and data related to monitoring, control and surveillance within the framework of joint inspection and surveillance schemes, as reproduced under Appendix 14.

118. The delegate of Lebanon stressed that he would verify whether this recommendation was in contradiction with the Lebanese law and report to the GFCM Secretariat in due course.

119. The representative of Oceana welcomed the adoption of this recommendation in light of the need to promote transparency at the regional level. He encouraged the GFCM to broaden such an approach so as to encompass all vessel listed in the GFCM regional fleet register, pursuant to relevant provisions in the Regional Plan of Action for the fight against IUU fishing (RPOA-IUU).

120. The delegate of the EU subsequently introduced a proposal on the regional marking of fishing gear, ultimately aimed at better controlling fishing activities. Similar recommendations were in place in other regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and, most recently, FAO had adopted a set of guidelines on this subject. It was high time that GFCM also took action on the marking of fishing gear to set processes in motion at the national level.

121. The delegates of Egypt and Tunisia noted that it might be difficult to convince fishers to act in accordance with the provisions of this proposal. Consequently, they suggested that a pilot phase could be launched to test the implementation of this recommendation, including at the subregional level. The WGFiT could be entrusted with the task of reviewing the results of this pilot phase and reporting to the CoC.

122. The Commission adopted Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/11 on the regional marking of fishing gear, the text of which is reproduced under Appendix 15.

ISSUES STEMMING FROM THE COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

123. The CoC Chairperson referred to relevant issues stemming from the twelfth session of the CoC in relation to the identification and clarification process, the GFCM IUU vessel list, the operationalization of VMS and control systems and the celebration of the International Day for the Fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (ID-IUU).

Identification and clarification process

124. The delegate of Ukraine clarified that, while his country remained fully committed to the implementation of GFCM recommendations, there was serious concern with the provisions in Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4 on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29) as Ukraine did not consider them consistent with international law, as reflected in relevant UN General Assembly resolutions. Consequently, Ukraine could not comply with this recommendation. He informed the Commission that Ukraine stood ready to work together with concerned CPCs during the intersession to amend this recommendation so that his country could implement management measures on turbot reflecting accurate catch figures.

125. The representative of the Shark Trust recalled that significant work had still to be carried out on providing detailed accounts on national legislations in place towards the protection of elasmobranchs, in line with current GFCM recommendations. She urged more efforts on data collection for these species.

126. The Commission agreed that letters of concern would be sent to those CPCs having reported to the CoC a “non-implemented” status for select GFCM recommendations, including non-transmission of data. Furthermore, letters of concern would be sent to Monaco and Moldova for not having submitted their national report to the CoC at its twelfth session.

127. Furthermore, the Commission agreed that formal letters signed by the GFCM Chairperson would be dispatched during the intersession through official diplomatic channels to invite cooperating non-contracting parties to become members.

List of vessels presumed to have carried out illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application

128. The provisional list of vessels presumed to have carried out illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application (GFCM IUU vessel list) was presented, based on document GFCM:42/2018/Inf.11.

129. The delegate of the EU drew the attention of the Commission to several inaccuracies in the list and requested that the GFCM Secretariat amend it according to comments submitted.

130. The delegate of Ukraine informed the Commission that the State Agency of Fisheries was working towards shedding light on the activities of the fishing vessel Nefelin and would bring relevant information to the attention of the GFCM Secretariat in due course.

131. The Commission decided to provisionally include the Nefelin in the GFCM IUU vessel list. It instructed the GFCM Secretariat to amend the list according to comments received and to circulate it, once adopted, to other RFMOs, for cross-listing purposes.

VMS and related control systems

132. The Commission welcomed progress in the operationalization of a regional pilot VMS and control systems and requested that this work be furthered during the intersession, focusing namely on greater interoperability among control systems in place at the regional level.

133. The representative of Oceana supported the proposal that the CoC address FRAs through effective monitoring in the context of the ongoing regional pilot VMS and control systems.

Celebration of the International Day for the Fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing

134. The Commission welcomed the celebration of the ID-IUU encouraging CPCs to actively support this initiative, including at the national and regional levels, with dedicated events.

135. The delegates of Egypt, the EU and Tunisia supported such celebration to take stock of progress in the fight against IUU fishing, mentioning in particular the possibility of best practice awards.

Launch of the second performance review of the GFCM, including assessment of the implementation of the subregional approach

136. The GFCM Secretariat outlined a proposal to undertake a second GFCM performance review in line with recent guidance from the UN General Assembly. After the first performance review in 2009, time had come to take stock of the latest developments with a view to assessing the effectiveness of the work of the Commission. Areas and criteria proposed for the second review were based on other RFMOs. Qualified consultants with strong expertise and knowledge of the region would be appointed for the independent panel tasked to evaluate GFCM performance.

137. The delegate of the EU was strongly in favour of the second performance review. He emphasized the importance of finalizing the proposed criteria as well as the terms of reference for independent experts, including required skills and competences. CPCs should be involved in this important preparatory exercise.

138. The delegate of Tunisia also supported such review suggesting that an informal working group be established to facilitate consultations on criteria and terms of reference.

139. The delegate of Morocco underlined the importance for independent experts to be from the region or very familiar with it.

140. The GFCM Executive Secretary clarified that independent experts would be recruited in accordance with FAO rules and procedures. However, consultations would help finalize terms of reference to be published in relevant vacancy announcements. CPCs would then be invited to encourage experts to apply.

141. The Commission agreed that informal consultations would be immediately entertained until 21 December 2018. The CAF Chairperson would facilitate these consultations. After this deadline, the GFCM Secretariat would produce a consolidated version of the criteria and terms of reference before launching the second GFCM performance review in early 2019. This review would foster a participatory approach, including subregional consultations with countries and relevant stakeholders, in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

142. The delegate of the Russian Federation recalled that his country had presented a proposal to further strengthen the subregional approach in the Black Sea within the framework of the GFCM. This proposal should be considered in the context of the performance review.

143. The GFCM Executive Secretary clarified that the subregional approach was a priority not only within the second GFCM performance review but also in the overall context of the Commission, as progress had been made in recognizing the specificities of each subregion.

144. The GFCM Executive Secretary then reported advances in the implementation of the subregional approach. After the inauguration of the first GFCM subregional office for the Black Sea in Burgas, Bulgaria, Croatia had volunteered to host a similar unit for the Adriatic Sea in Split and the relevant premises had been identified. As for the western Mediterranean, the municipality of Málaga had offered office space in the context of an international centre established through a LoA with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR); there was also an ongoing discussion between Spain and the GFCM towards the launching of this subregional unit at the premises of the Spanish Oceanographic Institute in Málaga. In the eastern Mediterranean, contacts continued with the FAO Office in Lebanon and with Lebanese authorities towards the opening of a subregional unit. Finally, for the central Mediterranean, both Malta and Tunisia expressed interest in hosting a subregional office.

145. The delegate of Bulgaria informed the Commission that his government had just ratified the agreement with FAO for the establishment of the GFCM subregional unit for the Black Sea.

146. The delegates of the EU and Tunisia stated that, to ensure geographical representation and full participation of countries, the GFCM subregional unit for the central Mediterranean would be established in Tunisia. They invited the GFCM Executive Secretary to make all possible efforts to provide this unit, as well as other subregional units, with necessary means, including through the possibility of mobility and mobilization of human resources in line with existing FAO rules.

147. The delegate of Libya welcomed this decision as his country would significantly benefit from a GFCM subregional unit in a neighbouring country.

148. The Commission praised and supported efforts towards the implementation of the subregional approach as it would be critical for the future.

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE PERIOD 2018-2020

149. The Commission was informed of the work programme proposed by its subsidiary bodies during the intersession, emanating from strategic activities and from new decisions adopted during the session. The work programme was endorsed as follows:

CAQ and WGBS (aquaculture)

Issues related to governance and regulatory aspects

- Prepare guidelines supporting the social acceptability of sustainable aquaculture development.

Issues related to environment and aquatic animal health

- Continue the work to assess opportunities for the development of integrated multi-trophic aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.
- Continue progress on the guidance document on aquatic animal health and welfare in Mediterranean and Black Sea countries.

- Develop guidelines on escapee and alien species in aquaculture based on the guidance document produced.

Issues related to quality and market of aquaculture products

- Carry out specific market segment studies along the value chain, based on methodologies identified through previous activities.
- Support aquaculture data collection systems (production statistics, production centres and market data), aquaculture assessment and mapping of aquaculture centres.
- Assess aquaculture market species at the regional and/or local level.
- Provide training and capacity-building to national focal points and other staff involved in data collection (including market data) and processing.

Activities within the framework of Aquaculture Demonstrative Centres in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea

Black Sea

- Organize a training programme on shellfish farming and control of pathologies, challenges connected to diseases including prevention aspects and biosecurity (Constanta, Romania).
- Organize a training programme on finfish farming and control of pathologies, challenges connected to diseases including prevention aspects, biosecurity and training on recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) (Trabzon, Turkey).
- Organize a demonstrative pilot field study to establish allocated zones for aquaculture (AZAs) in a Black Sea area.

Mediterranean

- Identify and establish new ADC units in the Mediterranean.

Technical assistance and cooperation on aquaculture

- Continue technical assistance on:
 - establishment of AZAs for both finfish and shellfish in the context of marine spatial planning.
 - risk analysis on aquatic animal health, disease analysis and prevention and early diagnosis of pathogens in fish farms.
- Continue collaboration with the Globefish system of the FAO Products, Trade and Marketing Branch (FIAM) on issues connected to social acceptability, within the framework of the MedAID project.
- Carry on collaboration within the MedAID project, in particular with its network of experts on fish pathology and veterinary.
- Continue collaboration on initiatives and activities on market and value chain aspects within the EU-funded PerformFISH project.
- Continue cooperation with IUCN, in particular on interactions between aquaculture and MPAs.
- Cooperate with Eurofish in the conference on market and technology innovation in aquaculture.

SAC and WGBS (fisheries)

Regional issues

Stock assessment and strengthened advice

- Compile relevant information on priority species towards increasing the coverage of stock assessment for these species.
- Organize data preparation and benchmark sessions, including external reviews, in line with the agreed calendar for the provision of advice.
- Continue supporting the implementation of harmonized scientific surveys-at-sea, in line with the established roadmap, to provide additional information and serve as tuning indices for assessment purposes. Provide fishery-independent indices of abundance for the main commercial species, including by harmonizing and extending existing surveys.
- Continue compiling socio-economic fisheries data, including on small-scale fisheries, in line with the agreed survey methodology and roadmap for data collection, with a view to providing accurate, timely and complete baseline data on fisheries to be integrated in management advice.
- Develop robust management strategy evaluation (MSE) frameworks that can be applied to a variety of fisheries and to data availability situations, focusing in particular on fisheries for which a management plan is being implemented or discussed, including small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea.
- Conduct theoretical and applied training activities to increase capacity in the subregions to perform quantitative assessments of management scenarios, including on the use of socio-economic models.
- Launch a research programme on European eel in the Mediterranean.
- Launch a research programme on blue crab in the Mediterranean, and work towards establishing a regional monitoring network for these species.

Data collection and quality indicators

- Streamline communication flows with CPCs for the exchange of information on data quality assessment through the DCRF online platform.
- Implement, on the DCRF online platform, conformity, stability and consistency quality indicators, together with timeliness and completeness for all the data transmitted by CPCs.
- Harmonize the DCRF data reporting requirements with existing GFCM recommendations, including on management plans, update the DCRF manual accordingly and release related transmission tools on the DCRF online platform.

Sustainable small-scale and recreational fisheries

- Compile information on the characterization of small-scale fisheries through the data collected from the socio-economic survey and discuss results within the WGSSF.
- Pilot the methodology for recreational fisheries in Lebanon, Tunisia and Turkey, as well as in other select countries as appropriate, with a view to developing knowledge on these fisheries, including interactions with SSF. If necessary, update the methodology according to pilot study outcomes.
- Steer and coordinate the implementation of technical elements within the RPOA-SSF, including the analysis of the actions therein by a dedicated consultant and in consultation with relevant working groups and the “Friends of SSF” platform, in order to develop a timetable with short-term and mid-term targets.

- Further refine the mapping tool of ongoing SSF activities by regional organizations, broaden it to incorporate additional stakeholder organizations and make it available online.
- Involve fishers in identifying best practice solutions for enhancing livelihoods in SSF through improved profitability and social protection, in view of the conference on social development.
- Facilitate a summer university for fishers and other stakeholders.

IUU fishing

- Support the implementation of activities 1–3 of the work plan for the estimation of IUU fishing, including the survey towards the estimation/assessment of IUU fishing (activity 3).
- Organize an expert meeting to address activities 4 and 5 of the work plan for the estimation of IUU fishing, in coordination with the CoC.

Interactions between fisheries and marine environment and ecosystems

Management of deep-sea fisheries (DSF) and protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs)

- Develop the GFCM Mediterranean geodatabase on VME indicator features and species.
- Report outcomes of intersessional work on VMEs to the SAC.
- Complete (also in consultation with stakeholders, NGOs and national authorities) and resubmit the proposal of a FRA in the Bari canyon (south Adriatic) and essential fish habitats (EFH) and sensitive habitats (SH) in the south Adriatic (Otranto channel) for discussion at the Subregional Committee for the Adriatic Sea (SRC-AS).

Mapping and roadmap towards a network of essential fish habitats

- Work towards producing composite observation-based EFH maps for some GFCM priority species.
- As a second step of the proposed roadmap towards a network of EFH, work towards determining how previously identified EFH and SH are connected. This analysis should include scientific knowledge of how nursery and spawning habitats are ecologically connected.

Bycatch and fishing technology issues

- Produce a regional review on the current state of bycatch in the GFCM area.
- Continue implementing, with relevant partners, a bycatch monitoring programme and related training activities, to collect representative data and facilitate the potential adoption of management measures towards the reduction of bycatch rates.
- Develop a catalogue of fishing gear, building on existing work developed through the MyGears project and other similar projects, and on the basis of the template on fishing technology by fishing gear and fisheries to be filled by experts (Appendix 4 of the WGFiT report).
- Prepare a medium-term (3-4 years) programme of work to address GFCM priorities in relation to fishing technology and selectivity, while concurrently developing a pilot project on the study of selectivity in the central Mediterranean (Gulf of Gabès).
- Study the implementation of fishing gear marking within the context of WGFiT.

Red coral fisheries

- Implement a research programme on red coral in the Mediterranean Sea.
- Provide an updated status of red coral populations, including adequate catch levels and updated advice on conservation measures established in line with relevant decisions.
- Update CITES on the work of the GFCM in the context of red coral.

Advances towards an adaptation strategy for climate change and non-indigenous species

- Implement the methodology for assessing the vulnerability of fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea to the effects of climate change in select case studies at the subregional level.
- Produce a qualitative analysis of the interactions between NIS and fisheries in Mediterranean subregions.
- Establish a NIS monitoring network in the Mediterranean.
- Work towards the identification of potential management measures for those NIS that become a target fishery.

Subregional issues

Adriatic Sea

- Implement the monitoring plan of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA, with the support of the AdriaMed project.
- Provide advice on the proposal for technical elements for the management of demersal resources in the Adriatic Sea.

Western Mediterranean

- Provide advice on blackspot seabream based on the roadmap for the quantitative assessment of the species, including on a minimum conservation reference size.
- Organize a dedicated session on non-indigenous species.

Central Mediterranean

- Identify additional European hake and deep-water rose shrimp nursery areas in the Strait of Sicily and validate simulated potential nursery areas through surveys-at-sea.
- Advance on deep-water red shrimps in the eastern and central Mediterranean (including the Strait of Sicily), including on the state of resources, based on the roadmap for the quantitative assessment of these species, on the provision of advice for precautionary conservation measures, and on the determination of fishing grounds.
- Launch concerted actions to support capacity-building in Libya.

Eastern Mediterranean

- Advance on deep-water red shrimps in the eastern and central Mediterranean, including on the state of resources, based on the roadmap for the quantitative assessment of the species, on the provision of advice on precautionary conservation measures and on the determination of fishing grounds.
- Advance on the provision of advice on the state of round sardinella within a data-limited context.

Black Sea

- Continue to investigate stock identification for the main commercial species, especially for turbot, red mullet, horse mackerel, and piked dogfish.
- Compile raw data by country for all priority species to ensure adequate assessment of stock status. This should include time series of landings, length distribution of landings, age length keys for the fleets, and bycatch and discards when available.
- Launch a research programme on rapa whelk in the Black Sea.
- Analyse the impact of other NIS, including *Mnemiopsis* and other gelatinous species in the Black Sea ecosystem.

CoC (compliance)

- Continue the identification and clarification process with a view to identifying new cases of non-compliance and/or express concern for potential new cases of non-compliance.
- Update the GFCM IUU fishing vessel list.
- Progress in the operationalization of a regional VMS and control systems through the ongoing regional pilot study, including the monitoring of FRAs, and present such progress to the Working Group on VMS and related control systems.
- Progress in the implementation of the RPOA-IUU, including matters relating to the assessment of IUU fishing in close coordination with SAC/WGBS, and present such progress to the Working Group on IUU fishing.
- Facilitate the application of the IMO number and of vessels identifiers.
- Support activities pertaining to the ID-IUU with particular focus on the regional level.
- Provide technical assistance to CPCs on matters related to compliance.
- Keep abreast of developments of measures to fight IUU fishing, including port state measures, FAO Global Record and transshipment.
- Advance further in the marking of fishing gear.
- Develop further the GFCM National Legislation Database.
- Assist in the establishment, in 2019, of a pilot project on observation and inspection programmes pursuant to Recommendations GFCM/42/2018/3 and GFCM/42/2018/4 on multiannual management plans for sustainable trawl fisheries targeting giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Levant (GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27) and Ionian (GSAs 19, 20, and 21) Seas and GFCM/42/2018/8 establishing further emergency measures in 2019–2021 for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (GSAs 17 and 18).

Meetings

150. The Commission approved the following meetings, some of which would be subject to human resource capacity, to the application of any new FAO administrative rules and circulars and to 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
Workshop on the “Guidelines in support of social acceptability of sustainable aquaculture development” (MedAID, CIHEAM) (WGGRA)	9–12 April 2019	Monastir, Tunisia
Workshop on interactions between aquaculture and marine protected areas (WGEAA)		
Eleventh session of the CAQ, including a special session of SIPAM	9–11 July 2019	Malaga, Spain
Regional meeting on analysis of value chains for select Mediterranean marine aquaculture products (WGQMA)	November 2019	Oran, Algeria

SAC/WGBS MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION
WGSAD benchmark session for the assessment of European hake in the Adriatic Sea (GSAs 17–18)	15–18 January 2019	FAO HQ, Rome, Italy
Workshop on age reading of selected Black Sea species	28 January–1 February 2019	Trabzon, Turkey
Working Group on Marine Protected Areas (WGMPA), including a session on essential fish habitats (EFH)	18–21 February 2019	FAO HQ, Rome, Italy
Joint GFCM/OceanCare Workshop on anthropogenic underwater noise and impacts on fish, invertebrates and fish resources	21–22 February 2019	
Working Group on Small-Scale fisheries (WGSSF)	5–6 March 2019	Podgorica, Montenegro
Subregional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (SRC-EM)	18–19 March 2019	Athens, Greece
Joint session on the assessment of deep-water red shrimps in the eastern-central Mediterranean	20 March 2019	
Subregional Committee for the Central Mediterranean (SRC-CM)	21–22 March 2019	
Subregional Committee for the Western Mediterranean (SRC-WM), including the WGSAD benchmark session on blackspot seabream	2–5 April 2019	Sète, France
Workshop on red coral (WKREDCORAL)	15–16 April 2019	FAO HQ, Rome, Italy
Workshop on the management of European Eel (WKMEASURES-EEL)	16–17 April 2019	
Benchmark session on small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea	13–15 May 2019	Split, Croatia
Workshop on the assessment of management measures for small-pelagic species in the Adriatic Sea (WKMSE-AS)	16–17 May 2019	
Subregional Committee for the Adriatic Sea (SRC-AS)	18 May 2019	
Twenty-first session of the SAC	24–27 June 2019	Cairo, Egypt
SGSABS benchmark session for turbot	9–11 July 2019	Burgas, Bulgaria
Eighth meeting of the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS)	17–18 September 2019	Trabzon, Turkey
Working Group on the allocation of the total allowable catch (TAC) for Black Sea turbot	19 September 2019	
Working group on stock assessment of demersal species (WGSAD)	November 2019	FAO HQ, Rome, Italy

SAC/WGBS MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION
Working group on stock assessment of small pelagic species (WGSASP)	November 2019	FAO HQ, Rome, Italy
Subregional group on stock assessment for the Black Sea (SGSABS)	December 2019	TBD
WGRF	2020	TBD
WGFiT	2020	TBD

COC MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION
Working group on IUU fishing (WGIUU), including a session on the clarification process	15–17 July 2019	Tirana, Albania
Working group on VMS (WGVMS)	17–18 July 2019	
Thirteenth session of the Compliance Committee (CoC)	19 July 2019	

GFCM MEETINGS (TRANSVERSAL MEETINGS)	DATE	LOCATION
Resumed forty-second session of the Commission	14 December 2018	FAO HQ, Rome, Italy
Second conference on Mediterranean fisheries and aquaculture, including social development for small-scale fisheries and progress on the MedFish4Ever Declaration	11–12 June 2019	Morocco
Celebration of the international day for the fight against IUU fishing (ID-IUU)		
High-level event on the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture in a Blue Growth Perspective	26–27 September 2019	Venice, Italy
Forty-third session of the Commission	4–8 November 2019	Rhodes, Greece

151. The Commission agreed on the engagement of consultant(s) to draft a medium-term (3–4 years) programme of work towards defining a clear research programme addressing GFCM priorities in relation to fishing technology and selectivity. It also agreed to advance on developing a pilot project to study selectivity in the central Mediterranean (Gulf of Gabès). In this respect, the delegate of the EU underlined that they stood ready to provide information collected through EU-funded projects and suggested to involve experts from outside the Mediterranean and the Black Sea in WGFiT activities.

152. The delegates of Algeria, the EU, Lebanon and Tunisia highlighted the need for a two-tier approach for the implementation of the RPOA-SSF and proposed to implement select priority actions during the intersession, while concurrently reflecting on longer-term planning in order to present a

proposal to the next session. To this end, the Commission agreed that a consultant prepare a draft plan for measuring full implementation of tangible actions through the RPOA-SSF; this would be subsequently refined in consultation with stakeholders at different levels and approved at the next session of the Commission. It was noted that the “Friends of SSF” platform could facilitate this consultation process.

153. The delegate of Italy was pleased to announce the hosting of a high-level event on fisheries that would take place in the second half of 2019 in Venice. Further consultations would be entertained with the GFCM Secretariat to further define the topic of this event as well as the issues to be addressed.

154. The representative of WWF noted his organization’s commitment to implementing the RPOA-SSF and offered its technical and financial support in moving forward the implementation over the next year.

155. On the request of the delegate of the EU, who referred to the sensitive and important activities in the Black Sea, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to personally chair relevant GFCM meetings on fisheries in the Black Sea.

NINTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

Report on administrative and financial issues

156. The ninth 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:42/2018/5, including activities undertaken through the autonomous budget and extra-budgetary funds, the functioning of the GFCM Secretariat, the management of GFCM headquarters, meetings, publications, payment status of contributions to the autonomous budget by contracting parties and expenditure reviews recorded in 2017.

157. The CAF Chairperson summarized the financial situation, indicating that the annual contributions received in 2017 from CPCs amounted to 95.7 percent of the adopted autonomous budget, in addition to arrears received from Lebanon, Malta and Romania. He informed that the cash accrual totalled USD 843 879 and that accumulated pending contributions for fiscal years 2005–2017 amounted to USD 871 510. 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 extra-budgetary funds, the CAF Chairperson indicated that there was a positive balance in both cases.

158. The GFCM Executive Secretary informed the Committee on recent advances in internal procedures for the recruitment of administrative staff (2 positions at G-4 level), that had been stalled for around two years and were now expected to be filled shortly. In addition, the recruitment of project-funded staff had also recently progressed and three professionals for fisheries and aquaculture (one Aquaculture Officer, one Fishery Resources Officer and one Fishery Officer for socio-economic issues) as well as an Office Assistant were expected to enter on duty soon.

159. The Committee expressed satisfaction in hearing that outstanding recruitments were finally being processed, as the important work of the Commission needed to be adequately supported to appropriately deliver in line with set objectives. Relevant FAO services were thanked for their efforts in supporting the GFCM.

GFCM budget and contributions by contracting parties for 2019–2020

160. The CAF Chairperson presented, on the basis of document GFCM:42/2018/6, a firm budget proposal for 2019 and a tentative budget for 2020 for the consideration of the Committee, including the contributions expected from contracting parties for the same period.

161. The GFCM Executive Secretary invited the Committee to only consider the 2019 budget for approval, as the tentative budget for 2020 was provided indicatively and was subject to change according to various parameters that could not be predicted ahead.

162. The delegate of the EU referred to the indicative 6.3 percent increase proposed for 2020 and stated that the EU and its Member States, although this budget was not being adopted and amounts were tentative, would not be able to accept such an increase.

163. The Committee agreed to further replenish, with immediate effect, the GFCM Working Capital Fund by means of the transfer of interest accumulated through paid contributions in addition to all arrears, positive balances deriving from favourable exchange rates, closed projects and other unspent financial resources at the end of each year, to be used as a reserve.

164. The 2019 budget, amounting to USD 2 537 241, was adopted as shown in Appendix 20(1). Expected contributions due by contracting parties are presented in Appendix 20(2). This budget included the recruitment of a second GFCM Security Guard (G-2/3).

Election of the CAF Bureau

165. 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.

166. All delegations paid special tribute to Mr Hachemi Missaoui (Tunisia) for his continuous efforts as Chairperson and for his dedication to supporting the CAF during its important transition, as well as to Mr Aleksandar Joksimovic (Montenegro) and Ms Nadia Bouhafs (Algeria), first and second Vice-Chairperson, respectively, expressing deep gratitude for the outstanding commitment shown during their mandates.

167. On the basis of the proposals and support expressed, the Committee unanimously elected Mr Roman Cicmirko (Slovenia) as Chairperson as well as Mr Atif Salah Megahed (Egypt) and Mr Constantin Stroie (Romania) as first and second Vice-Chairperson, respectively.

ELECTION OF THE GFCM BUREAU AND ENDORSEMENT OF THE BUREAU OF THE SAC, WGBS AND CAF

168. The Commission expressed its deepest gratitude to the GFCM Chairperson for his expert guidance, close rapport with countries and partners as well as effective leadership during the years of his mandate. His capacity and knowledge led the GFCM through an important period of growth. The Commission also paid tribute to the commitment and essential support of the Vice-Chairpersons.

169. The GFCM Executive Secretary recalled the decision made at the forty-first session of the Commission on the election of the GFCM Chairperson. During the intersession, candidatures had been submitted by Albania and Turkey. According to the rules in place, contracting parties would either reach a consensus on one candidate or were expected to vote for the election of the Chairperson.

170. Several contracting parties advocated that GFCM had to strive for consensus, including when it came to the election of its Chairperson. The consolidated practice so far was to avoid voting as this might go against the spirit of collaboration characterizing the Commission.

171. After extensive consultations, the delegate of Albania informed that her delegation, in order to preserve the collaborative spirit, was ready to postpone the election to an extraordinary session of the Commission to be held before the end of the year.

172. The delegates of Turkey and Albania agreed with the proposed course of action, recalling the importance of ensuring broad agreement within GFCM. This would also give contracting parties enough time to take an informed decision on this matter.

173. The Commission, noting the broad support by delegations, thanked Albania and Turkey for their consensual approach. It unanimously supported the proposal and gave mandate to the GFCM Secretariat to organize a resumed session before the end of 2018 to appoint the Chairperson, asking Mr Cataudella to continue serving in his current role until this session.

174. It was clarified that the resumed session would only consider the two candidatures received thus far for GFCM Chairperson, namely of Mr Roland Kristo (Albania) and Ms Esra Fatma Denizci Çakmak (Turkey), together with the three proposed vice-chairs, namely Ms Nadia Saichi Bouhafs (Algeria), Mr Imad Lahoud (Lebanon) and Mr Hachemi Missaoui (Tunisia). It was also decided that, in case of no consensus on one candidate for Chairperson, the session would proceed with a vote.

175. In relation to the bureaus of its subsidiary bodies, the Commission warmly thanked the outgoing Bureau members and unanimously endorsed the renewed SAC Bureau, composed of Mr Alaa Eldin El Haweet (Egypt) as Chairperson, Mr Eyup Mumtaz Tirasin (Turkey) as first Vice-Chairperson and Mr Aleksandar Joksimovic (Montenegro) 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 Ilhan Aydin (Turkey) as second Vice-Coordinator. It also endorsed the new composition of the CAF Bureau.

176. On the occasion of the resumed session held on 14 December at FAO headquarters, the Commission took note of the withdrawal of the candidature of Ms Esra Fatma Denizci Çakmak (Turkey) and unanimously elected Mr Roland Kristo (Albania) as GFCM Chairperson as well as Ms Nadia Saichi Bouhafs (Algeria) and Mr Imad Lahoud (Lebanon) as first and second Vice-Chairpersons, respectively.

ANY OTHER MATTER

177. The Commission expressed appreciation for the support provided by FAO services in the preparation of the session and for the excellent working conditions at FAO headquarters.

178. 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-THIRD SESSION

179. The Commission took note of the kind invitation made by the delegation of Greece to host the forty-third session in 2019, subject to final confirmation by relevant authorities.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

180. The report, including its appendices, was adopted on 26 October 2018, with the exception of the addendum reflecting the outcomes of the resumed session in December 2018. The new paragraph on the election of the GFCM Bureau was subsequently adopted by e-mail.

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- 2) **List of participants**
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- 4) **Statements pronounced at the forty-first session of the Commission**
- 5) **Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1 on a multiannual management plan for European eel in the Mediterranean Sea**
- 6) **Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/2 on fisheries management measures for the conservation of sharks and rays in the GFCM area of application, amending Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/3**
- 7) **Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/3 on a multiannual management plan for sustainable trawl fisheries targeting giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Levant Sea (geographical subareas 24, 25, 26 and 27)**
- 8) **Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/4 on a multiannual management plan for sustainable trawl fisheries targeting giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Ionian Sea (geographical subareas 19, 20 and 21)**
- 9) **Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/5 on a multiannual management plan for bottom trawl fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16), repealing Recommendations GFCM/39/2015/2 and GFCM/40/2016/4**
- 10) **Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/6 on an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside the waters under national jurisdiction in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16), amending Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/8**
- 11) **Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/7 on a regional research programme on blue crab in the Mediterranean Sea**
- 12) **Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/8 on further emergency measures in 2019-2021 for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subareas 17 and 18)**
- 13) **Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/9 on a regional research programme for rapa whelk fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29)**
- 14) **Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/10 on access to information and data related to monitoring, control and surveillance within the framework of joint inspection and surveillance schemes**
- 15) **Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/11 on the marking of fishing gear**
- 16) **Pending proposal on the establishment of a minimum conservation reference size for blackspot seabream in the Mediterranean**
- 17) **Protocols for the protection of VMEs in the GFCM area of application**
- 18) **Updated table of priority species**
- 19) **Terms of reference for selected activities**
- 20) **GFCM autonomous budget for 2019**
 - 1) **GFCM autonomous budget for 2019**
 - 2) **Contributions of the CPCs to the autonomous budget for 2019**

Agenda

- 1.** Opening and arrangements of the session
- 2.** Progress on cooperation matters
- 3.** Report on intersessional activities in 2017–2018
- 4.** Management of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture
- 5.** Issues stemming from the Compliance Committee (CoC)
- 6.** Launch of the second performance review of the GFCM, including assessment of the implementation of the subregional approach
- 7.** Programme of work for the period 2018–2020
- 8.** Ninth session of the Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF)
- 9.** Election of the GFCM Bureau and endorsement of the Bureau of SAC, WGBS and CAF
- 10.** Any other matter
- 11.** Date and place of the forty-third session
- 12.** Review and adoption of the report

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- GFCM:42/2018/Dma.3 Sofia Ministerial Declaration (available in English)
- GFCM:42/2018/Dma.4 Regional plan of action for small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (RPOA-SSF) (available in English and French)
- GFCM:42/2018/Dma.5 FAO. 2018. Macias, J.C., *et al.* 2018. *Allocated zones for aquaculture: a guide for the establishment of coastal zones dedicated to aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea*. General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. Studies and Reviews. No 97. Rome, FAO

Statements pronounced at the forty-second session of the Commission

(in original language)

Árni M. Mathiesen

Assistant Director-General, FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department

GFCM President, Mr Stefano Cataudella,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Executive Secretary, Mr Srouf,

Colleagues,

It is with pleasure that I welcome you, on behalf of the FAO Director General, Mr José Graziano Da Silva, to the FAO headquarters for this forty-second session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). This is a fitting setting for this Commission meeting, considering that the GFCM is ever-increasingly at the forefront in implementing FAO initiatives at the regional level. I applaud and am encouraged by this tremendous progress that the GFCM has been able to accomplish in recent years and, on behalf of the FAO, we look forward to further supporting this continued progress. As I know you have a long list of topics to cover over the next days, I wish to be brief in my remarks, however, I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to highlight some of the most relevant developments, from the FAO's perspective, that have taken place within the GFCM over this intersession.

With the adoption of the Mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, the GFCM armed itself with a decisive tool towards meeting the UN SDGs and addressing the pressing issues facing fisheries management in this region. Indeed, the GFCM was the first regional fisheries management organization to ever implement such a comprehensive plan. Now, in the second year of implementation, we are beginning to see encouraging signs. Trends for certain stocks are reversing and data collection activities are starting to fill in important knowledge gaps in the region. Such progress attests to the effectiveness of strong and coordinated cooperation among the riparian countries of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. We look forward to seeing similar strides being made in the coming years as the strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture, adopted at the Commission last year, is now being fully implemented. The two strategies together, demonstrate that the GFCM is genuinely committed to implement the provisions in the FAO Code of Conduct on the interactions between marine fisheries and aquaculture. This is a point that is worth making given that the Code remains, up to this very day, our policy lighthouse.

Allow me also to underline the strong contribution of the FAO Regional Projects (AdriaMed, CopeMed, EastMed, MedSudMed), not only in the implementation of GFCM strategies, but also in other activities to support the sustainability of Mediterranean fisheries. This network of projects has been in place for many years now and it has considerably underpinned the work of the GFCM at the country level. Now that the strategies are in place they have become ever more crucial and the exemplary collaboration between the projects and the GFCM has led to stronger synergies being built within the overall framework of the FAO. Furthermore, the strategies have driven enhanced coordination between the GFCM and the FAO Regional Offices too, providing a framework for the FAO to “act as one” in the region.

Another area where the GFCM has been a leader in realizing FAO objectives has been in combatting IUU fishing and implementing regional port state measures. Indeed, this year we celebrated for the first time, on 5 June 2018, the first International Day for the Fight Against IUU Fishing. This historic event, which was driven by a GFCM initiative, has served to bring light to the scourge that IUU fishing presents and ensure this topic is given the importance it deserves in policy discussions.

This intersession has also seen the historic event which took place less than a month ago in Malta. The Ministerial Declaration on the Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, which was signed by 18 countries at the end of a very successful High-level conference, is truly a breakthrough achievement which has empowered this region to take strong and coordinated action to address small-scale fisheries and their role in poverty eradication, equitable development and sustainable resource utilization. I commend the GFCM for the success of this initiative, which has garnered much attention throughout the region and beyond. In fact, the RPOA – which is fully aligned with the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) – is a first-timer in terms of a specific region taking such proactive and comprehensive steps towards implementation of the SSF Guidelines. The FAO therefore remains keenly interested in supporting the implementation of the RPOA, including by providing expertise in complementary issues such as decent work and social protection, and we look forward to learning from the experience of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and holding up this region as a best practice at a global level.

On the heels of World Food Day, which was celebrated last week on 16 October, we applaud the progress being made, yet we also recognize the long road ahead if we are to secure food security and sustainable livelihoods from fisheries in this region. We must rise to meet our current challenges – stock status, climate change, marine litter, IUU fishing, and social development, to name a few – and we must tackle these challenges with modern and innovative solutions. The GFCM is on the right track, including by building successful partnerships to address multi-dimensional issues, but more must be done.

To this end, I know that these issues, and many more will be discussed over the course of the coming days and so I wish to cede the floor to allow as much time as possible for these important deliberations. I wish you much success in your work over the coming days and I challenge you to continue taking bold steps in order to achieve our common vision of a sustainable Mediterranean and Black Sea that supports food security and livelihoods for generations to come.

Stefano Cataudella
Chairperson, General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean

Excellencies,
FAO ADG-FI (Mr Arni Mathiesen),
Executive Secretary of the GFCM (Mr Abdellah Srour),

Dear national delegates,
Representatives of partner organizations and civil society organizations,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Colleagues,

This is the last time that, as GFCM Chairperson, I have the honour and pleasure to welcome you at an opening session of the GFCM annual meeting. Thank you for having come so numerous today and for your constant support to the work of this commission. With your permission, I would like to rewind for a moment and look back at some of the main highlights during my tenure of GFCM Chairperson. In so doing, I want to be very objective, expressing my satisfaction when accomplishments were achieved and voicing some constructive criticism for things that can be still improved. I am grateful for the trust you have always shown to me.

When I took on the role of GFCM Chairperson we just came off the first performance review in the history of the GFCM. This review revealed that the Commission had to make significant efforts to improve its efficiency and modernize its operations against the background of the challenges in our complex region. Getting into this daunting task, we have emphasized two main priorities: the need to act through a participatory approach and that to duly take into account of the specificities in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Both priorities were crucial in my view to inform a process of strengthening of the GFCM as well, in more general terms, to forge the *modus operandi* of the Commission. These priorities were successfully tackled via the creation of an inter-governmental task force, open to Members, relevant non-Members and key stakeholders in the region for them to be actively involved during the intersessional period. In this case the means, namely the process leading to the fourth amendment to the GFCM Agreement, rather than the result, namely the adoption of the fourth amendment to the GFCM Agreement, was of significant importance. Make no mistake about, I am not trying to play down the fourth amendment to the GFCM Agreement: it was an effective development that turned this Commission into one of the most modern RFMOs in the world. What I am trying to say is that by broadening for the first time the scope of our discussions, reaching out to new actors, we have tremendously increased the visibility of the Commission so that others had an opportunity to know it and know the importance that it has. This has set important processes in motion, from the granting of Cooperating non-Contracting Party status to several countries that I hope will soon become full members, to the signature of numerous memoranda of understanding with partner organizations and, more recently, the adoption of three ministerial declarations. Signs like these are unmistakable evidence of legitimacy and relevance and, to the best of my knowledge, the openness of the GFCM has been praised time and again.

When talking about the specificities in our diverse region, I have witnessed the blossoming of a genuine interest at country level to shift towards a sub-regional approach. What started off as a provocative thought is now a concrete reality. Last May the first sub-regional unit of the GFCM was inaugurated, thanks to the efforts by the Bulgarian Government, and it was very fitting for this sub-regional approach to be jump-started with the Black Sea. A lot of work has been done by the GFCM Secretariat in this sub-region and more is expected given the recent operationalization of the BlackSea4Fish project. Other sub-regions are following suits. We have encouraging signs from the Adriatic and the Western-Med where Croatia and Spain, respectively, have shown interest to establish a sub-regional unit of the GFCM.

Bringing the GFCM closer to realities that exist on the ground will be instrumental to deliver results for the benefit of the entire region.

Speaking of results, we are all aware of the dire status of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries. A mid-term ambitious strategy was adopted to deploy a programmatic and measurable plan, based on targets and actions. The optimistic rationale being that by 2020 we will have reversed the negative trend in the decline of commercial fish stocks that we have been witnessing in recent years. I cannot omit to acknowledge the efforts in the context of the GFCM, and particularly its Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries, to get us through this objective, but we are not there yet. What has been done so far it's not enough and I hereby call upon everyone to do a part and contribute to do better. You must support the growth of independent research on fisheries in your countries.

Similarly, the strategy for sustainable aquaculture has endowed the Commission with a practical tool to step up the production in farmed seafood at the regional level. We have a fairly clear picture of the problems and the issues that the aquaculture sector faces and this is in large part thanks to the GFCM task force activities. However, we should expect more as supplying our market with more and better, in terms of quality, farmed fish is imperative. The GFCM should help us to do that while giving us clear guidance in light of market trends and international trade. In this regard, I believe that more contacts should be promoted with the private sector if we aim at informing a decision-making process oriented towards the priorities of the consumers.

I want to thank the FAO Regional Projects for their continuous support to the work of the GFCM. Again this year, the donors of the AdriaMed, CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed projects, namely Croatia, EU, Italy, Slovenia and Spain, have supported their implementation demonstrating that these are country-driven initiatives. I reckon that, while the level of coordination between the FAO Regional Projects and the GFCM remains good, we could do more. The same holds true for the broader GFCM-FAO relationship having regard in particular to the administrative hurdles that at times slow down the GFCM in carrying out its mandate. Even GFCM donors are experiencing that, and I am referring to the EU, France, Monaco and Spain that have continued to support the work of the Commission. I would like to thank them for that as well as to thank the GFCM Secretariat for the high standards of work in all the various areas covered by the mandate of our Commission. I would be remiss without saying that.

I wish this Commission to remain committed and country driven as the GFCM truly is a platform that can reconcile the different interests in this region via an independent decision-making power. To that end, you will have to make sure that transparency, including at the level of national administrations, and independence, in terms of providing scientific advice to the Commission, are underpinned at all times. These are the fundamental elements for sound policy-making in fisheries and aquaculture in addition to the awareness of what, borrowing from the concept of real economics, "real fisheries and aquaculture" really come down to. Always ask yourselves what should drive the demand for technical assistance, what would fishers think and do when you are proposing management measures and what this Commission can do to fill the gaps that still exist in this vast region. Because this is where the GFCM is, and will always be, an added value, as I have learnt these years.

In conclusion, let me tell you that acting as the Chairperson of this Commission has been for me a personal and professional achievement. I wish you success with this session and I wish, as of now, success to my successor to be elected later on this week.

Thank you very much.

Veronika Veits
Director, European Commission – DG MARE

Dear Assistant Director-General,
Dear Executive Secretary of the GFCM,
Dear delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first thank the FAO for hosting this meeting here in Rome. It is always very enjoyable to come to this beautiful and historical city. It is also a pleasure for me to attend for the first time the GFCM annual session and to express the opening statement on behalf of the European Union in this really important regional fisheries management organization. It is also a great opportunity to recall that over the last three years, we have garnered political support and commitment for action around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea to improve the fisheries governance in those two sea basins and to move towards sustainable fisheries, notably with the adoption of the Bucharest Declaration for the Black Sea in 2016 and the MedFish4Ever Declaration in March 2017. In June this year, the Sofia Declaration on sustainable fishing in the Black Sea was endorsed, and as mentioned by Mr Mathiesen, last month, we signed a Malta Ministerial Declaration on a regional plan of action for small-scale fisheries. This has only been possible due to the excellent work and the high ambition of all of the countries involved, the industries, NGOs, fishers, all stakeholders and, of course, the irreplaceable role played by the GFCM Secretariat.

With these declarations, we have a comprehensive framework in place that should guide our exchange over the next decade. What we need to do now is to continue delivering on our commitments and to actually turn ink into action. That is why the European Union intends to make the most of this GFCM session. We do have an ambitious set of proposals for recommendations in order to deliver on our common objectives. These objectives are well-known: i) safeguarding the sustainable use of fisheries resources; ii) reinforcing the compliance system; iii) addressing the Mediterranean specificities, such as the impact of recreational and small-scale fisheries; and iv) promoting sustainable development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

On that basis, we intend to propose a series of recommendations, which have been prepared during the dedicated working groups, the Scientific Advisory Committee and the Compliance Committee, together with all contracting parties. We will present, among others, management and conservation measures for European eel in the Mediterranean, measures for small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea, rapa whelk in the Black Sea, giant red shrimps and blue and red shrimps in the Ionian and Levant Sea, as well as blue crab in the Strait of Sicily and measures for sharks and rays. We will also propose to consolidate the management measures that exist in the Strait of Sicily, for facilitating the monitoring, notably within the framework of the international inspection scheme that has permitted a fruitful cooperation between the contracting parties for the last two years. To strengthen control and the fight against IUU fishing, we will propose the adoption of recommendations on the marking of fishing gear and on access to information for the contracting parties engaged in joint inspection schemes. The European Union will also support the work prepared by the GFCM Secretariat regarding the priority session of the actions listed in the regional plan of action on small-scale fisheries. We all know that fisheries science plays a vital role as a basis for sound conservation and management for the key species in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. Therefore, also the European Union will fully support the work programme of the Scientific Advisory Committee.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are looking forward to fruitful discussions on these proposals and very much count on your support for them. The European Union contribution to the work of the GFCM is not only

about tabling proposals, it is essentially to move forward the sustainability agenda, and therefore we will also continue to back financially the GFCM.

The European Union stands ready to support our non-European Union neighbors. We will therefore continue providing assistance for capacity-building, in particular thanks to the efforts of the European Fisheries Control Agency, which organizes trainings for inspectors in different sea basins, and thanks to support mechanisms and our enlargement and neighborhood policy, such as TAIEX. This technical assistance and information exchange instrument allows us to assist riparian states in the implementation of the MedFish4Ever and the Sofia declarations. Also supporting scientific cooperation and strengthening technical capacities with third countries is paramount for establishing conservation measures on specific fisheries. In this regard, we are currently financing the four specific FAO projects and we will continue to provide our support to these regional projects.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention on three important initiatives and events that will take place in the months to come, in accordance with our international commitments, and these are, first of all, the scientific forum, which takes place in mid-December this year. This forum will bring together the scientific community in order to establish and build a network of scientists. It will allow to discuss how to best progress in science and to integrate scientific knowledge into decision-making, and it will also allow hopefully to determine the scientific and research priorities for the years to come.

The second event is the follow-up ministerial conference on MedFish4Ever, which will take place in the first half of 2019 and will be an important moment to take stock of where we are in the implementation of the declaration.

And the third event, to which we are looking forward is a social conference that will also take place in the first half of 2019, and this conference will address the social aspects of small-scale fisheries in terms of working conditions and social protection or decent work.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the hosts for these important events and reassure them that we will try to assist them as much as possible in the preparation.

Ladies and gentlemen, we all hope to see a successful annual session this week. We, from our side, will do the utmost to ensure fruitful discussions and a satisfactory outcome of this meeting. We hope ultimately to see another big move forward towards healthy fish stocks in the Mediterranean and towards profitable fisheries sector in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

Let me conclude and thank the GFCM Secretariat for the excellent preparation of this meeting and for all the efforts they are putting into the work of the organization. Thank you very much.

Fatima Zohra Hassouni
Chef de la Division de la Durabilité et Aménagement des Ressources Halieutiques
Département des Pêches Maritimes, Morocco

Monsieur le Directeur Général de la FAO,
Monsieur le Président de la CGPM,
Monsieur le Secrétaire exécutif de la CGPM,
Mesdames et Messieurs les Délégués,

C'est pour nous un plaisir de participer avec vous à cette 42^{ème} session de la Commission Générale des Pêches pour la Méditerranée (CGPM) au siège de la FAO, et le nombre des participants de la délégation marocaine prouve l'importance que notre pays accorde à cette organisation. Je tiens à féliciter le Secrétariat pour tous les efforts déployés pour le développement durable de la pêche afin de contribuer à la sécurité alimentaire et à la lutte contre la pauvreté dans sa zone d'application y compris la Méditerranée.

Notre ambition commune étant de parvenir à une gestion saine et pérenne de nos pêcheries notamment méditerranéenne et une valorisation adéquate de l'ensemble de nos ressources naturelles dans un contexte de changement climatique avéré.

Nous sommes tous convaincus ici, que les stocks halieutiques de la Méditerranée s'amenuisent. Ce constat nous préoccupe par les répercussions possibles de cette situation sur les milliers de pêcheurs et principalement les pêcheurs artisans en Méditerranée.

Le Royaume du Maroc s'est très tôt engagé volontairement et fortement, dans la préservation de ses ressources naturelles de toute nature et leur valorisation économique raisonnée, dans le cadre d'une approche intégrée, participative, inclusive et responsable.

Dans ce sens et dans la continuité de l'engagement de notre pays en faveur du développement durable notamment vis-à-vis des ORGP y compris la CGPM, le Maroc a endossé la stratégie à moyen terme de la CGPM pour la Méditerranée et la mer Noire (2017-2020) lors de la dernière session annuelle en mai 2016 et la déclaration ministérielle « Med Fish 4ever » à Malte en mars 2017, et a signé le protocole d'accord avec la CGPM en novembre 2017 à Marrakech pour la mise en œuvre des activités de la stratégie à moyen terme au niveau national. Ces actions concernent principalement les systèmes de surveillance des navires (en particulier pour la pêche artisanale, y compris les dispositifs de marquages électroniques), la préparation du Forum sur les sciences Halieutiques, l'exécution des campagnes régionales en mer, des enquêtes sur les caractéristiques socio-économiques des pêches, des actions spécifiques en support aux communautés et plateformes de pêcheurs artisanaux, aquaculture. Le Maroc a signé avec la CGPM une convention pour la mise en œuvre de la stratégie aquacole régionale à travers des actions ciblées pour soutenir la volonté de notre pays à développer l'aquaculture sur des bases durables. Ces actions s'inscrivent dans le cadre de notre stratégie nationale Halieutis de développement et de compétitivité du secteur halieutique du Maroc notamment ses axes de durabilité et de compétitivité.

Le Maroc comme annoncé lors de la conférence de Malte en septembre dernier compte abriter la Conférence de haut niveau sur la protection sociale en premier semestre de 2019.

Récemment, le Maroc a signé le plan d'action régional pour la pêche artisanale lors de la Conférence de haut niveau sur la pêche artisanale durable en Méditerranée et en mer Noire à Malte en septembre 2018. Ce plan viendra sûrement se greffer sur les projets de la pêche artisanale lancés par le Maroc et constituera un prolongement de certaines actions déjà entamés.

Pour clore mon intervention, je tiens à adresser vifs remerciements à la CGPM et particulièrement à l'équipe de son secrétariat pour leur collaboration et je souhaite plein succès aux travaux de cette session.

Nadia Saichi Bouhafs

Ministère de l'Agriculture, du Développement Rural et de la Pêche, Algeria

Monsieur le Sous Directeur Général des pêches et de l'aquaculture/ FAO
Monsieur le Président de la Commission Générale des pêches pour la Méditerranée
Monsieur le Secrétaire Exécutif de la CGPM
Honorables délégations
Mesdames et Messieurs,
Honorables assistances,

Permettez-moi, tout d'abord, de remercier en mon nom personnel et au nom du Gouvernement de mon pays, l'Algérie, la FAO d'avoir accueilli cette 42^{ème} session de la Commission dans cette belle ville qu'est Rome, et de participer avec vous, aujourd'hui, à cet important événement consacré à un nouvel engagement politique, de gouvernance et de gestion pour la mise en œuvre de d'un plan d'action sur la pêche et l'aquaculture en Méditerranée et en mer noire à travers l'adoption de nouvelles recommandations.

De même, nous tenons à saluer à cette occasion, tous les progrès réalisés à ce jour, à l'échelle méditerranéenne, par l'ensemble des parties prenantes, au travers des différents travaux menés à l'échelle régionale, ayant permis de développer une démarche et une approche commune en faveur d'une pêche et aquaculture durable.

À cette occasion, il me plaît d'adresser mes vifs remerciements aux membres de la Commission générale des pêches pour la Méditerranée, l'UE ainsi qu'aux projets régionaux, au Comité d'organisation et à tous ceux qui ont contribué à la préparation et à l'organisation excellente de cette rencontre.

Je voudrais, également, saisir cette occasion pour remercier, les différentes délégations ici présentes pour leur appui constant aux programmes et aux activités de la Commission, réitérant ainsi, leur engagement à soutenir le processus et les actions inscrites pour développement de la pêche.

En cette heureuse occasion, il me plaît, Mesdames et Messieurs, de vous assurer que l'Algérie adhère pleinement à cette démarche vertueuse pour la promotion de la pêche, à telle enseigne que nous nous en sommes largement inspirés pour l'élaboration de notre stratégie de développement des pêches et de l'aquaculture, baptisée « Aquapêche Algérie 2020 », avec une attention particulière à la pêche artisanale, et c'est dans ce cadre que nous avons initié nos projets de développement de l'Aquaculture, de Clusters maritimes intégrés, de Pesca tourisme et autres Aires de pêche protégées.

C'est pourquoi l'Algérie s'attelle, à l'instar de nombreux pays, à protéger son environnement marin pour les générations futures, par des actions visant à améliorer le système d'exploitation et de gestion des ressources halieutiques, tous en se basant sur les principes internationaux de croissance bleue.

Cette session annuelle ne pourrait que renforcer les efforts déployés à l'échelle nationale pour le développement durable, notamment à travers la définition d'une approche stratégique concertée qui répond aux attentes de la profession et obéit aux règles d'une exploitation durable.

Je souhaite une rencontre fructueuse et je suis certain qu'avec le soutien des différents partenaires, et de vos interventions, la session produira d'importants résultats et marquera un important point de départ pour la pêche et l'aquaculture dans la Méditerranée et en mer noire.

Enfin, j'aimerais en félicitant, encore une fois, les organisateurs de ce grand événement, vous assurer la volonté de l'Algérie à renforcer davantage sa coopération et son engagement à poursuivre le travail sur les différents sujets, afin de contribuer à la concrétisation des plans d'actions régionaux pour le développement de la pêche et de l'aquaculture et à la réalisation de ses objectifs.

Merci de votre attention.

H.E. Stela Stingaci
Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to the Republic of Italy, Republic of Malta and UN
Agencies based in Rome

Thank you Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, we would like to thank you for the invitation to the 42nd session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, including the 9th Session of the Committee on Administration and Finance, organized under the FAO auspices.

Taking this opportunity we would like to express our gratitude for granting to the Republic of Moldova the status of non-contracting party at the 41st Session of the Commission in Montenegro last year, which represents a very important step forward for the involvement of the Republic of Moldova in the work of the Commission and, in due time, to full its membership.

The importance for the Republic of Moldova to be integrated within the GFCM, was stressed in light of obligations we have under the Association Agreement/DCFTA with the EU which contains, among others, provisions on cooperation with European partners in the field of conservation and management of fish stocks, ensure the regulation of commercial fisheries and implement effective measures monitoring and control of fishing activities, aquaculture etc.

We are now more committed, especially after the signature of the historic declaration in conclusion of the High-level Conference on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture on 7 June 2018, which sets concrete objectives and actions that should help develop a comprehensive regional governance in the Black Sea. The Ministerial Declaration refers to 3 very important areas of cooperation for the Republic of Moldova, which we would like to reiterate as follows:

1. **Supporting the elaboration of national legislation in the field of fisheries and aquaculture consistent with relevant requirements under international agreements as well as under GFCM recommendations.** Republic of Moldova's priorities in this area are primarily focused on the implementation of the provisions of the Association Agreement. It is worth mentioning that the Republic of Moldova, starting with 2016, has not approved quotas for commercial fishing in the natural fishery aquatic objectives, which is an important branch in the country's economy. This is due to illegal, unreported, unregulated and undeclared fishing that puts a lot of pressure on fisheries. It is very important to ensure the regulation of commercial fisheries and implement effective measures monitoring and control of fishing activities.
2. **Protection of fishery resources.** For sustainable management in this area, the Republic of Moldova needs support in assessing fish stocks. In this context, it is very important for us to have a support in ensuring adequate data collection and exchange of data on all commercial fish stocks including small-scale and recreational fisheries to reinforce scientific knowledge on fish stocks and ecosystems. Also, an important role has the ensuring adequate collection on socio-economic fisheries-related data to support the decision making on management solutions and their impacts, to further integrate the socio-economic dimension in fisheries management.
3. **Aquaculture.** Considering that, in the Republic of Moldova, aquaculture is a developing branch, the aspects like common researches in aquaculture, ichthyology and hydrobiology; the sharing of experience in the preparation and implementation of joint projects in the field of fish breeding, fish transport and storage of fishery products, are very important for us. It is also important the assistance in the organization of growth and reproduction of genetic resources highly productive of the main pond fish farming: carp, perch, etc .; Also, providing and introduction of new technologies, scientific and methodological information in the aquaculture area, attending conferences and

publishing scientific articles; exchange of scientific experience for trainees, research assistants would be very useful for us.

We count on the cooperation with GFCM and FAO in implementing selected activities through the provision of technical assistance towards responsible fisheries and sustainable aquaculture, within the remit of the “Mid-term strategy (2017-2020) towards sustainable fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black sea”.

Seizing this occasion, we would like to highlight our strongest commitment to further support all actions necessary to move further in implementing the established goals.

Thank you!

Chedly Rais
Consultant, ACCOBAMS

On behalf of the Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS (Mrs. Florence DESCROIX-COMANDUCCI), I would like to express the satisfaction of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat as for the collaboration we have with GFCM. Collaboration that contributes in achieving the objectives of ACCOBAMS for the conservation of cetaceans and for the sustainability of fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

From the 41st session of GFCM we had the opportunity to further extend our collaboration with the GFCM Secretariat mainly through joint projects to assist a number of Mediterranean countries to address the issue of interactions between some fishing activities and cetaceans. In this context we completed a first joint project involving seven Mediterranean countries through the implementation of pilot actions targeting depredation in fishing gear and other negative interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities. The project allowed to better understand the mechanisms of these interactions and to experiment some mitigation measures. Also, a series of best practice manuals were produced as joint documents by ACCOBAMS, GFCM and FAO.

The collaboration between the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS and the Secretariat of GFCM has been extended this year through two new initiatives that consist in two collaborative multi-species projects involving other regional partners and aiming at mitigating bycatch and depredation by improving our knowledge about these issues of special interest for our two Organisations. These two projects are being implemented thanks to a substantial financial support from the MAVA Foundation.

We wish also to collaborate with GFCM on concrete actions to assess incidental catches of cetaceans in the Black Sea and work with the concerned countries on mitigation measures.

The Memorandum of Collaboration signed between the ACCOBAMS and GFCM Secretariats provides a good framework for these collaborative activities.

The year 2018 is particularly important for ACCOBAMS. Indeed, during this year, one of our most important projects has been implemented. It is the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative whose objective is to assess the cetacean populations abundance and distribution in the Mediterranean. To this end, an unprecedented large-scale survey took place this summer in the Mediterranean Sea with the participation of almost 100 scientific observers from all the Mediterranean and two Black Sea countries. These consisted mainly in aerial surveys along predefined transects designed to ensure a representative coverage of the Mediterranean Sea. For this purpose, 8 aircrafts were mobilized and flew about 800 hours. Five vessels also conducted boat surveys for passive acoustic surveys and to cover areas where it was not possible to obtain permits for aerial surveys. All the Mediterranean countries have contributed to this initiative. While the focus of the survey was on cetaceans, it was an opportunity to collect also data on mega-fauna and marine litters.

Now, after the field surveys, we are working on the scientific interpretation of the data collected. Scientists from all the countries that contributed to the surveys contribute to the exercise of data processing and interpretation. *(Preliminary results are available on ACCOBAMS website and we will organise a side event to present the data during the Fish Forum of GFCM next December here in Rome).*

This initiative required several years for the development of the survey protocol and for raising necessary fund. It became reality thanks to the financial contribution from the MAVA Foundation, the Prince Albert II Foundation and the ACCOBAMS Contracting Parties. A similar survey is planned for the Black Sea.

Besides the data collected, this initiative has been an opportunity to strengthen the skills of the Mediterranean scientists through training workshops as well as through their participation in the aerial and boat surveys. The whole project assists ACCOBAMS Parties and range states in fulfilling their obligations regarding the EU-MSFD and the EcAp process of UNEP-MAP. The data collected will be

particularly useful for the conservation of cetaceans, including to help manage the issue of interaction between cetaceans and fishing activities.

Thank you very much.

Nidhal MELAOUAH
Fisheries and Aquaculture Expert, AOAD

Au nom du professeur Ibrahim El Dukheri Directeur Général de l'OADA qui n'a pas pu assister à cette session en raison de ses engagements ultérieurs Je remercie le secrétariat de la CGPM pour l'invitation adressée à l'OADA pour prendre part aux travaux de la 42^{ème} session de la CGPM. D'autre part nous sommes convaincus que la signature du MoU entre la CGPM et l'OADA constitue un cadre institutionnel propice au développement de la coopération en matière de pêche et d'aquaculture au profit des états membres, sachant que parmi les 23 membres de pays arabes de l'OADA, sept d'entre eux figurent parmi les membres de la CGPM.

Il est à noter que les domaines de travail de l'OADA correspondent à ceux de la CGPM et en particulier dans le domaine de l'aquaculture où l'OADA a élaboré la stratégie arabe pour le développement de l'aquaculture 2017-2037, et vient de réaliser le plan exécutif de cette stratégie, et cela peut constituer un des axes de travail commun entre la CGPM et l'OADA et bien d'autres domaines d'intérêt commun sur la préservation des ressources marines vivantes, développement de la pêche artisanale.

Je réitère toute ma confiance dans la réussite de cette coopération.

Je vous remercie.

Nicolas Fournier,
Policy advisor, Oceana

Dear Executive Secretary, honorable delegates,

Oceana would like to provide some reflections on priorities this GFCM 42th session. It is also important to put into perspective discussions to come, as you all know, the latest UN assessment on the State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA, 2018) has confirmed that the Mediterranean in the world's most overexploited sea.

Oceana therefore calls on GFCM Contracting Parties, to act collectively to adopt the necessary measures that restore the productivity and health of the Mediterranean Sea, in particular as committed in the MedFish4Ever Declaration. CPs have made commitments in 2017, some of which under ambitious timelines, but nevertheless we hope this 42nd Commission will deliver these commitments. I would like to particularly point to 2 priorities elements:

1 - To establish the Mediterranean network of Essential Fish Habitats (EFH), as committed in Resolution GFCM/41/2017/5 by both designating new Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRA) to protect nurseries and spawning grounds and reduce excessive fishing mortality. And the second aspect is to include specific provisions in GFCM multi-annual plans, to systematically identify nurseries and spawning areas for priority stocks, establish protections for them, and strengthen their control and monitoring surveillance. On that point Oceana would like to inform the meeting that we will be organizing a workshop on Essential Fish Habitats at the GFCM Fish Forum in December, where we invite all delegates to participate.

2 - To take strong measures to combat IUU fishing and implement the RPOA-IUU adopted in 2017. This should be done by supporting the proposed recommendation on access to information and data related to monitoring and control. In view of the recently launched Global Record of Vessels by FAO, as well as Article 24 of the RPOA-IUU, Contracting Parties should consider widening the scope of this recommendation to include all fishing activity in the GFCM area;

Such measures will also allow GFCM to move closer to transparency and accountability standards existing in other RFMOs. I thank you for your attention and wish you a productive meeting.

4.2 New proposals for GFCM decisions (SAC)

- European Union proposal for a GFCM recommendation establishing a multiannual plan for sustainable trawling fishing activities in the Ionian Sea (Geographical sub-areas 19, 20 and 21) for the Giant red shrimp and Blue and red shrimp

- European Union proposal for a GFCM recommendation on establishing a multiannual management plan for bottom trawl fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily (GSAs 12 to 16), repealing Recommendations GFCM/39/2015/2, GFCM/40/2016/4

Desde Oceana nos gustaría dar la bienvenida a este/estos nuevo(s) plan(es) plurianual(es), pero también nos gustaría puntualizar sobre un par de cuestiones relacionadas con la protección de Hábitats Esenciales (Essential Fish Habitats en inglés):

- (1) La primera, desde Oceana consideramos que cada nuevo plan debería contener provisiones para la protección sistemática de nurseries y zonas de puesta, ya que esta medida contribuiría directamente a la reducción de la mortalidad por pesca y por tanto a la recuperación de stocks sobreexplotados. Sin embargo, la protección de estas zonas no debería ser una medida complementaria sujeta a la elaboración de Planes plurianuales, debería ser una medida obligatoria para todos los stocks dados los resultados de la última evaluación de stocks. La protección de hábitats esenciales deberían ser medidas de urgencia, priorizando las especies sobreexplotadas y con bajos niveles de biomasa.

- (2) Y la segunda consideración. Hace tan solo 1 año y medio en marzo de 2017, todos los ministros de pesca del mediterráneo, es decir todos los representantes políticos de las delegaciones aquí presentes, se comprometieron a través de la Declaración MedFish4Ever a tener una red de Hábitats Esenciales en 2018. Este compromiso se ratificó el año pasado en esta misma Comisión a través de una nueva Resolución (GFCM/41/2017/5) con las mismas intenciones tener una red de Hábitats Esenciales para este año. A día de hoy, no tenemos red de hábitats esenciales y tampoco compromiso de las Partes para hacerlo en un corto plazo.

4.3 New proposals for GFCM decisions (CoC)

- Recommendation on Access to information and data related to the monitoring, control and surveillance:

Oceana welcomes this proposal as a necessary and good step to conduct effective MCS operations. However we would also like to encourage that the requirement to share authorized vessel lists be extended beyond pilot projects and inspection schemes, to be aligned with article 24 of the RPOA on IUU from the GFCM, where all CPCs commit to meet the data requirements of GFCM which includes an *“annual submission of a full dataset, plus regular updates on vessels listed in the GFCM regional fleet register”*.

Furthermore, we urge GFCM CPC to consider making such list public, thus allowing GFCM to move closer to existing transparency standards in other RFMOs, ICCAT requires not only annual information on access to coastal waters of CPCs and provides information on the target species, as well as the operator. On a voluntary basis, many CPCs to ICCAT already upload their vessel authorisation lists on a regular basis (i.e. Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone). In addition, in June 2018 the Global record of Fishing vessels was launched by FAO, which aims to also include authorisation data in the future.

5. Issues stemming from the Compliance Committee (CoC)

VMS and related controls system:

Oceana welcomes the suggestion to assess monitoring and compliance of FRAs by the CoC. As a matter of fact we reiterate our call for GFCM to adopts a more systematic and robust monitoring and control framework for FRAs, as illustrated by the growing evidence of non-compliance and possible illegal fishing in currently established FRAs.

We are concerned that FRAs may remain protected on “paper” only, whereas they are key tool to protect VMEs, deep-sea sensitive habitats and essential fish habitats (EFH). Not having them enforced is not serving their purpose neither fish stocks/ecosystems/nurseries and nor the fishermen that exploit the resource around. More importantly, making FRAs effective fisheries management tools is also a prerequisite to the success of the future GFCM network of Essential Fish Habitats.

Sigrid Lueber
President, OceanCare

Distinguished Chair and Delegates,

In 2016, OceanCare signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the GFCM to work together on illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, bycatch, marine debris and ocean noise pollution. We are pleased to report on a variety of activities pertaining to these issues.

In December 2017, OceanCare started a survey among fishermen on the east coast of Sicily to learn more about their perception of negative impacts on fisheries and possible solutions, their interaction with non-target species such as dolphins and sea turtles, their assessment of marine plastic pollution, and the acceptance of marine protected areas. A total of 34 fishers operating mainly longlines, trawl nets, gill nets, trammel nets, and purse seines in nine fishing ports have been interviewed so far. Although this first survey is part of an ongoing study not completed yet, we would like to share some preliminary results.

Among the most striking results is the fact that over 60 percent of the interviewed fishers think that abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) at sea is a problem, whereas 94 percent replied that specific facilities in the ports to dispose of old and broken fishing gear are completely missing. Forty-four percent of the respondents affirmed that entanglement in ALDFG happens to sea turtles and dolphins, whereas the bycatch of sea turtles is reportedly more common, and the high numbers of bycaught sea turtles indicated by some fishers are worrisome and need to be further examined. While the interviewed fishers admit that overfishing is the main cause for a decrease in fish landings, they highlighted the fact that IUU fishing is a problem in their area and that effective controls are needed.

This first part of the survey allowed interesting insights into the routines of a local fishery community, their perception of the impacts they have on the environment, their assessment of factors negatively influencing fisheries and their ideas of ways forward. This study will be continued to increase the number of respondents, to cover different fishing seasons and areas, and is planned to be completed in 2020.

We would like to inform the Commission about several beach cleaning activities OceanCare has undertaken in Spain and Italy, as well as educational outreach projects with schools in Mallorca and Sicily.

We have also tried to find different ways of communication to raise awareness about the issue of ocean noise and marine debris, to broaden the target audience and ultimately achieve a change in behaviour. Such elements include two edutainment videos, which are available in the main Mediterranean languages.

In 2017, we have launched the I-CARE campaign aimed at empowering the public to reduce plastic waste. The campaign is mainly directed towards young people and focusses on social media. A campaign song of an environmentally conscious rock band has been integrated. On the campaign's website, people are asked to take a pledge to reduce their disposable plastic consumption. A real time calculator measures the impact of such commitment in terms of the reduced yearly consumption of disposable plastics. This is a catalyst to encourage participants to further rethink their plastic consumption. Additionally, participants are presented with eco-friendly products helping them to keep their promise.

We are convinced that innovative campaigns such as I-CARE will significantly contribute to a rethinking about our attitude towards plastic use.

Pertaining to international processes, OceanCare was a panelist at the 19th United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea on the issue of Anthropogenic Underwater Noise in June 2018, and held two side events at such occasion. Moreover, OceanCare developed a concept note for a possible study by FAO on the impacts of ocean noise on marine resources, and its socioeconomic consequences. We will elaborate further on these activities under Agenda Item 3. Thank you.

Ali Hood
Director of Conservation, The Shark Trust

Our organizations, which have a special focus on shark and ray conservation, appreciate delegates' consideration of our views on the pending proposal from the European Union (EU) to strengthen the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) ban on finning (slicing off a shark's fins and discarding the body at sea). We applaud the EU for proposing measures to prevent waste while improving shark catch data across species.

Specifically, we urge the GFCM to prohibit removal of shark fins on-board vessels, as well as the retention, transshipment, and landing of shark fins that are not naturally attached to carcasses, without exception.

The IUCN Shark Specialist Group and the European Elasmobranch Association¹ have found that under such a policy:

- Enforcement burden is greatly reduced;
- Information on species and quantities of sharks landed is vastly improved; and
- “High-grading” (mixing bodies and fins from different animals) is impossible.

The “fins-naturally-attached” method is widely accepted as the best practice for enforcing finning bans, and -indeed- the only way to guarantee that sharks have not been finned. Such a rule could also facilitate sorely needed, species-specific data on Mediterranean shark catches. The technique of making a partial cut and folding fins against the body can address industry concerns about safety and storage.

Because of the many practical advantages associated with the fins-naturally-attached method, the policy has been mandated not only in the EU, but also in the United States, Canada, most of Central and South America, and many countries fishing in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is also gaining acceptance in international arenas, as demonstrated by adoption by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (2014) and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (2016), as well as support from a majority of Parties to the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, including Albania, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, the Russian Federation, and most of West Africa.

We urge the GFCM to ensure enforceability of the existing finning ban by prohibiting at-sea removal of shark fins.

Please support the EU proposal to amend GFCM/36/2012/3.

The Shark Trust is a UK charity working to safeguard the future of sharks through positive change.

Shark Advocates International is a project of The Ocean Foundation dedicated to securing science-based policies for sharks and rays.

Ecology Action Centre promotes sustainable, ocean-based livelihoods, and marine conservation in Atlantic Canada.

Focused on sharks in peril and marine debris, Project AWARE is a growing movement of scuba divers protecting the ocean planet – one dive at a time.

These groups have formed the Shark League (www.sharkleague.org).

The Shark League is funded by the Shark Conservation Fund.

Gaetone Leone
Coordinator, UN Environment/MAP

Mr. Chairman, Assistant Director General, Executive Secretar, Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan-Barcelona Convention system I thank you for the invitation to participate at the Forty-second session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean.

It is an honor to share with this Commission a brief report on the strengthening cooperation between UNEP/MAP and GFCM, cooperation that supports progress towards our common aim, the achievement of healthy and productive Mediterranean Sea and Coast.

The health of marine and coastal ecosystems is a prerequisite for sustainable fisheries. In turn, sustainable fisheries and sustainable management of the fish stocks contribute to good environmental status of the oceans and seas. Thus, cooperation between environmental and fisheries experts and organizations is a prerequisite for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The unique nature of the partnership of GFCM and UNEP/MAP Secretariats responds to this need, through the development and implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding, which was welcomed in recent years as a potential model for other regional seas, in various key international meetings, including for instance at the SDG14 Ocean Conference.

The recent CBD Sustainable Ocean Initiative Capacity Building Workshop for Northern Africa and the Mediterranean, which took place just a week ago in Tangiers, Morocco, highlighted how the efficient cooperation among a Regional Sea Convention and a Regional Fishery Management Body can support progress towards achieving Aichi Target 6 and 11 at national level in the countries of the region.

The Workshop was an important opportunity of dialogue and cooperation for national representatives and actors on marine biodiversity conservation and fisheries and marine resources management to work together, with the support of the CBD Secretariat and UNEP/MAP and GFCM experts.

It resulted in developing strategies and action plans to enhance cross-sectoral approaches to conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity. Based on its outcomes, the CBD Secretariat in collaboration with relevant regional organizations, will prepare a synthetic document on capacity building needs that will be used as a concrete proposal to be presented to potential donors/funding institutions.

We stand as an example for other regions also in terms concrete results of the implementation of our Memorandum of Understanding, which includes the development of the 2017 Mediterranean Quality Status Report, in which GFCM had a leading role in the development of the fisheries related part.

The Joint implementation of a Sub-Regional Pilot Study in the Eastern Mediterranean on Non-Indigenous Fish Species was an innovative pilot initiative that resulted in a sub-regional monitoring plan, in line with the UNEP/MAP Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme and with the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework.

Management of marine litter in Mediterranean is also a priority in line with both of our Mid-Term Strategies. In this regard GFCM participation and contribution to the UNEP/MAP-led Regional Platform on Marine Litter management in the Mediterranean continues to be crucial. I am also looking forward to sharing our experience on marine litter management, building on the best practice of the implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management for the Mediterranean, during the Marine Litter Workshop at the 2018 GFCM Fish Forum.

This Workshop will aim to exchange best practices in relation to fishing measures on reducing marine litter (as ghost nets) and will contribute to the development of the Marine Litter Adaptation Strategy of

GFCM and in concrete terms to the elaboration of mitigation measures which are necessary to reduce and mitigate the effects of marine litter on marine ecosystems and fisheries.

We are excited about the GFCM Fish Forum – this will undoubtedly be a key event, in which we aim to participate meaningfully to further enhance exchange of knowledge between biodiversity and fisheries experts. We plan various Workshops and a side event, including on topics of marine litter and area-based management measures.

At UNEP/MAP, we welcome full-heartedly the commitment of GFCM and its Members to provide protection to vulnerable marine ecosystems and essential habitats for marine species, both through the adoption of Fisheries Restricted Areas and through discussing protocols and mechanisms to minimize the impact of fisheries on the ecosystem. I strongly believe that this approach can also provide a more sustainable and cost-efficient fisheries management in the contiguous marine areas including high seas.

In this regard, I would like to specifically welcome that one of the proposed recommendations aims at further protection to shark and rays, also aligning with the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Annex II and III.

Mister Chairman, distinguished delegates,

The strong focus of the agenda of this Session on biodiversity protection showcases the recognition of the importance of sustainable management of marine resources and the strong commitment of GFCM members to this goal. This is also an area on which we have a long-standing cooperation with GFCM, in line with our Memorandum of Understanding.

One important output of this cooperation is GFCM Resolution/37/2013/1 “on area-based management of fisheries, including through the establishment of Fisheries Restricted Areas and coordination with the UNEP/MAP initiatives on the establishment of SPAMIs”, which has been key to move towards harmonization of the criteria to identify Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance and Fisheries Restricted Areas, where appropriate.

I was very interested to see in this regard that some of this Fisheries Restricted Areas for which management points will be discussed in upcoming days overlap with Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs), as such opening the possibility that both GFCM and UNEP/MAP work together to minimize any significant impact from anthropogenic activities.

In this spirit, UNEP/MAP indicated already its willingness during the Meeting of the Forty-first session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean to work closer together, specifically in relation to the recently established Fisheries Restricted Area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area of the Adriatic Sea.

Let me reconfirm here today this willingness and go even a step further by expressing my expectation towards an even closer cooperation in relation to area-based management measures. When such measures either under GFCM or UNEP/MAP auspices are adopted, they can be bases for further coordinated actions both to ensure harmonization of the criteria to identify FRAs and SPAMIs, and to establish such areas in a coordinated manner.

As I said, we strongly believe that such cooperation is necessary to ensure that objectives and targets related to achieving Good Environmental Status of these specific areas are met. This would be a positive practice towards Marine Spatial Planning based on the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach.

Finally, let me recall here that the excellent cooperation between the two Secretariats has recently also involved exchanges of lessons and practice in relation to our respective Compliance mechanisms – enforcement is becoming more and more crucial to achieve our respective goals, and I look forward to continuing on this path of partnership and joint delivery.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you a successful meeting.

Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1 on a multiannual management plan for European eel in the Mediterranean Sea

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;

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);

TAKING NOTE that the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 recommends that marine and coastal ecosystems should be protected and sustainably managed by 2020;

TAKING NOTE that the SDG 14 recommends that scientific knowledge should be increased and research capacity developed;

TAKING NOTE that the SDG 14 recognizes the need to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (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;

DEEPLY CONCERNED that the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) concluded, at its nineteenth session (Slovenia, May 2017), that the stock of European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) was in a critical state;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the SAC, following the conclusions of the joint EIFAAC/ICES/GFCM Working Group on Eels (WGEEL), recommended at its nineteenth session that anthropogenic mortality affecting the production and escapement of silver eels be reduced – or maintained – as close to zero as possible;

WELCOMING the fact that the SAC recommended at its nineteenth session that data concerning European eel be collected within the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF);

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;

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, taking into account socio-economic aspects, and that an appropriate method shall be established to this end;

ACKNOWLEDGING the principles and international standards of responsible fishing practices enshrined in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries;

RECALLING that the signatories of the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration urged all riparian States to comply with the management measures adopted by the GFCM and to fully implement the GFCM mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries;

NOTING that Resolution GFCM/40/2016/2 for a mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries includes a specific target on reversing the declining trend of fish stocks through strengthened scientific advice in support of management;

BEARING IN MIND that Resolution GFCM/40/2016/2 lists European eel as a priority commercial species of conservation concern for which an advice should be produced for the Mediterranean Sea;

WELCOMING management efforts made by certain contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) to support sustainable exploitation of European eel in their marine waters, freshwaters and in their transitional brackish waters such as lagoons and estuaries;

RECOGNIZING that urgent action is needed to ensure the recovery of the stock across its range of natural distribution and that measures need to apply during all stages of European eel life cycle, from the glass eel to the silver eel stage;

BEARING IN MIND that the particular migration and life cycle patterns displayed by catadromous fish require specific management and conservation measures;

NOTING that the SAC recommended, at its nineteenth session, that a Mediterranean adaptive regional management plan for this species shall be developed;

CONSIDERING that the population of European eel is considered a single stock so that the provisions included in this recommendation shall contribute to the recovery of the species;

CONSIDERING that the specific life cycle traits of catadromous species such as European eel call for specific management measures;

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

PART I

General objectives, geographical scope and definitions

General objectives of the multiannual plan

1. This recommendation establishes a multiannual management plan for the fisheries catching European eel in the Mediterranean Sea, in line with the precautionary approach to fisheries management. It shall be designed to provide and maintain high long-term yields and to guarantee a low risk of stock collapse while maintaining sustainable and relatively stable fisheries.

2. CPCs in the territory of which fishing activities catch European eel in the area referred to in paragraph 1 agree to implement such multiannual management plan for the fisheries concerned, in accordance with the general and specific objectives and measures set by this recommendation.

3. With due regard to the critical state of the European eel stock as reported by the SAC and to the ensuing urgency to restore the conservation state of this stock, CPCs agree that all activities catching European eel shall be covered by this plan, namely targeted, incidental and recreational catches.
4. A set of transitional precautionary management measures shall be developed in order to address the immediate need to decrease fishing mortality and to ensure that the stock is kept at biologically sustainable levels in the long term.
5. CPCs may take into account in their management measures other anthropogenic mortality factors, in order to reduce their impact on European eel and increase the likelihood that individuals escape to the sea, as well as include restocking or translocation practices.
6. Upon adequate data collection, the SAC shall formulate advice on long-term measures in accordance with the objectives set out in paragraph 1.
7. On the basis of SAC advice, the GFCM shall adapt and complement as appropriate the transitional precautionary management measures in order to meet the objectives set out in paragraph 1.
8. The multiannual management plan shall be applied in a fair, timely, transparent and non-discriminatory manner, consistent with international law and without prejudice to stricter or broader-encompassing measures that may already be established by CPCs in their national management plans.

Geographical scope

9. The multiannual management plan established by this recommendation shall apply to all marine waters of the Mediterranean Sea.
10. Taking into account the specificities of the life cycle of European eel, and the importance to include the management measures foreseen in all the habitats where fishing activities occur, CPCs agree to include freshwaters and transitional brackish waters, such as lagoons and estuaries, within the scope of this recommendation.

Definitions

11. For the purpose of this recommendation, the following definitions shall apply:
 - a) “European eel” means fish pertaining to the *Anguilla anguilla* species;
 - b) “Mediterranean Sea” means geographical subareas (GSAs) 1 to 27 included, 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;
 - c) “recreational fishing” means a non-commercial fishing activity exploiting marine living resources for recreation, tourism or sport;
 - d) “illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing” or “IUU fishing” means the activities set out in paragraph 3 of the 2001 FAO International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing;
 - e) “authorized landing point” means ports, or places close to the shore and designated by the CPCs where landing of European eel catches is authorized;
 - f) “fishing authorization” means a special authorization granted by legal authorities and entitling a natural or legal person or fishing vessel to engage in commercial fishing activities catching

European eel, whether these catches are targeted during a specified period or in a given area;

- g) “closure period” means a specific period of the day or the year when fishing activities resulting in landings of European eel are prohibited;
- h) “DCRF manual” means the manual prepared by the SAC and endorsed by the Commission at its thirty-ninth session, resulting from the implementation of the DCRF.

PART II

Specific objectives

12. This recommendation establishes a multiannual management plan for European eel. The operational objective of this management plan is to contribute to controlling the fishing mortality and ensuring the long-term conservation and long-term sustainable use of this species in the Mediterranean Sea, in accordance with Article 2 of the GFCM Agreement and paragraph 1 of this plan.

13. The objective of the transitional precautionary management measures is to immediately adjust fishing mortality levels together with other possible measures and to address the critical state of the stock, as mentioned in Part III of this recommendation.

14. The transitional management measures shall also prepare the ground for a future management plan while reducing the risk that, in the absence of scientific assessment, the stock biomass will drop to extremely low levels, jeopardizing the economic viability of the fisheries exploiting European eel.

15. The plan shall ensure that relevant data concerning European eel and the fisheries exploiting it are collected through the DCRF online platform and in accordance with relevant GFCM decisions, and that scientific research is conducted in order to, *inter alia*, identify long-term management measures.

16. The plan shall ensure that, upon the timely provision of scientific advice by the SAC, the GFCM reviews and adapts the short-term management measures, if appropriate.

17. The plan shall finally pursue the reduction of IUU fishing activities in its area of application.

PART III

Transitional management measures

Transitional management measures

18. In the short term, CPCs shall implement a reduction of the fishing effort or catches of European eel of at least 30 percent compared to the reference period 2006–2008 or to another three-year reference period defined by CPCs. This reduction shall apply on a progressive basis of an annual 10 percent reduction over a period of three years starting from 1 January 2019, i.e. the year following the forty-second session of the GFCM. The reference period shall be without prejudice to the discussions in the context of the working group referred to under paragraph 33 of this recommendation and shall not prejudice from the definition of a future reference period. Where national management plans resulting in effort or catch reductions of at least 30 percent have been implemented before the entry into force of this recommendation, the reference period may be the one designated in the national management plan.

19. CPCs shall establish an annual fishing closure of three consecutive months where landing European eel shall be prohibited. In order to decrease fishing mortality effectively, the closure period shall be defined by the CPCs in their national management plan, together with its fisheries and the gear targeting European eel. The fishing closure period shall be consistent with the objective defined in paragraph 18, with national management plans in place and with the temporal migration patterns of European eel in the CPC concerned.

20. CPCs may establish fisheries restricted areas (FRAs) within the geographical scope of this recommendation to further protect European eel. It shall be prohibited to land catches of European eel made in the FRAs, and specimens accidentally captured shall be immediately released upon their catch. The location and boundaries of the FRAs shall be consistent with the provisions set out in paragraph 18 and with the distribution of the main habitats of European eel in the CPC concerned.

National management plans and national management measures

21. National management plans and national management measures already in force in the territories under the jurisdiction of CPCs shall be communicated to the GFCM Secretariat by 31 January 2019 at the latest.

22. CPCs which do not have national measures in force shall adopt by 30 June 2019 a minimum set of measures consistent with paragraphs 18 to 20, and shall communicate them to the GFCM Secretariat by 31 January 2020 at the latest.

23. The national management plans adopted by CPCs shall establish technical measures, such as authorized fishing gear and mesh size.

24. CPCs may adopt voluntary measures to complement the multiannual management plan. These voluntary measures may take into account *inter alia* the conservation state of European eel in their waters, the impact of fishing activities catching European eel in their waters and relevant context specific to the relevant CPC, such as other anthropogenic mortality sources.

25. These measures shall be communicated to the GFCM Secretariat within one month of their entry into force.

PART IV

Data collection, scientific research programme and review clause

Data collection

26. Data provided by CPCs and referred to in the DCRF manual, including past data as far back as possible and the areas where European eel is known or likely to occur in their respective waters under the scope of this recommendation, shall be transmitted to the GFCM Secretariat not later than the forty-third session of the CGPM. The areas where European eel is known or likely to occur shall be defined, where possible, by closed polygons, where the summits coordinates are reported using the World Geodetic System 1984 spatial coordinate system. CPCs are encouraged to provide maps illustrating these areas, using the same spatial coordinate system.

27. Where recreational and/or IUU fishing are known to occur, data available, including estimates, shall also be transmitted to the GFCM Secretariat no later than the forty-third session of the GFCM.

28. CPCs shall transmit to the GFCM Secretariat data pertaining to restocking activities as well as data pertaining to fattening activities in accordance with the deadlines set in Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/6 on reporting of aquaculture data and information, amending Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/4.

29. CPCs may also transmit to the GFCM Secretariat any additional information on a voluntary basis, if possible no later than the forty-third session of the GFCM.

Scientific research programme

30. The GFCM Secretariat, with the support of the SAC, shall provide terms of reference, including costs, services and other requirements to support the implementation of a research programme on

European eel in the Mediterranean Sea, in line with the one described in Appendix 7 of the report of the nineteenth session of the SAC. The research programme shall be launched in 2019 and completed in 2021, at the latest 6 months before the forty-fifth session of the GFCM.

Review clause

31. The multiannual management plan shall be assessed by the SAC and, if necessary, reviewed by the GFCM at its forty-fifth session.

PART V

Working group, assessment by the SAC and adoption of measures to achieve the long-term objectives

32. CPCs shall report on the implementation of the multiannual management plan to the GFCM in 2021, no later than the forty-fifth session of the Commission. If national measures were implemented, their assessment should be included in this report. If possible, CPCs are encouraged to provide an estimate of the impacts of the multiannual management plan and of their voluntary measures.

Working group

33. A working group shall be established to examine management measures for European eel. The tasks of the working group are defined in the annex to this recommendation.

Assessment by the SAC

34. In 2023, not later than six months before the forty-seventh session of the GFCM, the SAC shall advise on appropriate measures to achieve the long-term objectives set out in paragraph 1. To this effect, the SAC shall formulate an advice taking into account the reports of the CPCs, the result of the scientific research programme, the output of the working group, the data collected in the DCRF framework and the characteristics of the European eel conservation status and of the fisheries in the territories of the CPCs. The SAC, while duly taking into account the specificities of the European eel fisheries of CPCs, shall advise, *inter alia*, on the effectiveness of the management measures referred to in Part III, as well as on suitable catch limits or effort measures, on the minimum sizes, on appropriate technical measures, such as mesh and hook sizes and on other possible measures resulting in selectivity improvements.

Adoption of measures to achieve the long-term objectives

35. In 2023, at the forty-seventh session of the GFCM, CPCs shall adopt long-term management measures to achieve the objectives set out in paragraph 1, complementing or replacing the measures referred to in Part III.

PART VI

Fishing authorizations, landings and measures to fight IUU fishing: catch registration, traceability and control

Fishing authorizations

36. The authorization to land catches of European eel shall be conditioned to the granting of a fishing authorization, in accordance with the national management plans in place. Fishing authorizations shall be subject to the provisions set out in Part III and the CPCs shall maintain an updated register.

37. By 1 January 2020, each CPC shall establish a list of all fishing vessels flying its flag and authorized to fish for European eel in their respective waters under the scope of this recommendation, irrespective of the length overall of the vessel.

38. By 1 January 2020, each CPC shall establish a list of all authorized transitional and brackish

waters, such as lagoons and estuaries, where traditional permanent fish-harvesting static gear used to catch European eel are in place.

39. Authorizations referred to in paragraphs 36 to 38 shall be transmitted to the GFCM Secretariat by 30 June 2020 and updated regularly.

Landings

40. Landings of European eel shall only be authorized in landing points designated for this purpose. CPCs shall communicate the list of such landing points to the GFCM Secretariat not later than the forty-third session of the GFCM.

41. By way of derogation from paragraph 40, CPCs may put in place measures alternative to designated landing points, provided that they effectively contribute to the fight against IUU fishing.

Measures to fight IUU fishing: catch registration, control and traceability

42. CPCs shall ensure that the fishers or masters of the vessels authorized to harvest European eel have the obligation to record their catches in live weight.

43. CPCs shall ensure that, in the special case of transitional and brackish waters such as lagoons and estuaries where European eel catching continues to be carried out with permanent traditional fish-harvesting static gear, authorized operators have the obligation to record their catches in live weight.

44. 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 put in place a mechanism to record in the logbook its daily catches of European eel, irrespective of the live weight of the harvest.

45. CPCs shall set up a traceability system for landings, sales and exports allowing the catches to be traced from the authorized landing point to the final destination, whether the specimen are sold alive, dead or transformed.

46. By 1 January 2020, each CPC shall establish a list of auction halls, bodies or persons authorized by this CPC to undertake the first marketing of European eel.

Recreational fishing of European eel

47. CPCs shall establish on a regular basis an estimate of the number of recreational fishers and their catches of glass, yellow and silver eels.

PART VII

Final provisions

Entry into force

48. National measures or measures referred to in Part III shall not derogate to or weaken the provisions agreed by CPCs under this multiannual management plan but complement them with a view to increasing the recovery rate of the stock of European eel.

49. The multiannual management plan does not prevent CPCs from adopting more stringent national measures.

50. Developing countries intending to develop their European eel fishery shall present a development plan including a management plan based on this recommendation which shall be assessed

by the SAC not later than 30 June 2020. If the development plans are not in line with the general and specific objectives set out in this multiannual management plan, the SAC shall formulate recommendations, taking into account the specificities of the developing country in question.

Terms of reference for the working group on European eel

The working group referred to in paragraph 33 shall:

- 1) be supported by the GFCM;
- 2) establish a working plan for the development of its work and hold at least one meeting during 2019, before the next meeting of the SAC;
- 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 SAC.

Based on the information collected under Parts III and IV of this recommendation, the working group shall advise the SAC, at the latest in 2022, on appropriate management measures to achieve the objectives referred to in paragraph 1 of this recommendation. While duly taking into account the specificities of the European eel fisheries of the CPCs, it shall advise, *inter alia*, the SAC on the effectiveness of the management and technical measures referred to in Part III, on suitable catch limits, fishing effort, minimum sizes, mesh and hooks sizes and on other possible measures resulting in selectivity improvements.

Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/2 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 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 2002 Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and in particular its Plan of Implementation;

RECALLING the 2003 Declaration of the Ministerial Conference for the Sustainable Development of Fisheries in the Mediterranean (2003 Venice Declaration);

REAFFIRMING the principles of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 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 shark species in either Annex II or Annex III of its Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol);

NOTING the importance of harmonizing conservation and management measures with other international conventions for the protection of these species;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the advice of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) and, in particular, the need to identify species and ensure a better conservation status of sharks, including by protecting coastal areas from the most active fishing gear;

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

**PART I
Scope**

1. Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (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 that the catch, incidental catch and, whenever appropriate, release of these species can be monitored and recorded.
2. CPCs shall adopt fisheries management measures to ensure adequate conservation status of sharks.

**PART II
Definitions**

3. For the purpose of this recommendation, the following definitions shall apply:
 - “Shark” means any species of the taxon Elasmobranchii;
 - “Shark fins” means any fin 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 codend 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 III

Fisheries management measures

4. CPCs shall ensure that:
 - a) it is prohibited to remove shark fins onboard vessels and to retain, transship or land shark fins;
 - b) in order to facilitate onboard storage, shark fins may be partially sliced through and folded against the carcass, but they shall not be removed from the carcass before landing;
 - c) beheading and skinning of specimens onboard and before landing are prohibited, and beheaded and skinned sharks shall not be marketed at first sale after landing; and
 - d) it is prohibited to purchase, offer for sale or sell shark fins which have been removed, retained onboard, transhipped or landed in contravention of this recommendation.
5. In relation to the reduction of trawl fishing in coastal areas to enhance the 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 metre isobath is not reached, or within the 50 metre isobath where that depth is reached at a shorter distance from the coast.
 - b) Specific and spatially limited derogations may be granted by CPCs on condition that such derogations only affect a limited number of vessels and provided that they:
 - i) are justified by particular geographical constraints, such as the limited size of the continental shelf along the entire coastline of a CPC or the limited extent of trawlable fishing grounds due to different factors;
 - and/or
 - ii) concern small trawling vessels of less than or equal to 12 metres length overall and engine power of less than or equal to 85 kW traditionally operating in coastal areas;
 - or
 - iii) concern a limited number of vessels during a seasonal fishing campaign;
 - and
 - iv) have no significant impact on the marine environment.
 - c) CPCs shall inform the GFCM Secretariat on the modalities of applying the derogations under subparagraph b) above no later than 31 March. Such notification shall include:
 - i) a list of authorized trawling vessels with their characteristics;
 - ii) relevant zones identified by geographic coordinates, both on land and at sea, and by GFCM statistical rectangles as defined in Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM logbook, amending Recommendation GFCM/34/2010/1; and
 - iii) measures taken to monitor and mitigate impacts on the marine environment.
 - d) CPCs shall establish a specific monitoring plan for the trawl fisheries operating under derogation, as stipulated by subparagraph b).

- e) These provisions are without prejudice to more detailed or stricter rules implemented by CPCs.

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 for elasmobranch species listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol of the Barcelona Convention, which must be released unharmed and alive, to the extent possible.
7. Specimens of shark species listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol shall not be retained on board, transhipped, landed, transferred, stored, sold or displayed or offered for sale.
8. CPCs shall ensure that tope shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*) specimens caught with bottom-set gillnets, longlines and tuna traps be promptly released unharmed and alive, to the extent possible.

PART IV
Monitoring, data collection and research

9. CPCs shall ensure that:
- a) information on fishing activities, catch data, incidental catches, release and/or discarding of sharks species listed either in Annex II or Annex III of the SPA/BD Protocol, is recorded by the ship owner in the logbook or in an equivalent document, in line with the requirements of Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1;
 - b) such information is reported to the national authorities for notification to the GFCM Secretariat within their annual national reporting to the SAC and in accordance with the data reporting requirements of relevant GFCM recommendations, in line with the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF); and
 - c) any other additional measure is taken to improve data collection in view of the scientific monitoring of species.
10. As appropriate, the GFCM and its CPCs shall, individually and collectively, engage in capacity-building efforts and other research cooperative activities to improve knowledge on sharks and shark fisheries and to support the effective implementation of this recommendation, including entering into cooperative arrangements with other relevant international bodies.
11. The provisions referred to in paragraphs 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are without prejudice to stricter rules implemented by CPCs.

Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/3 on a multiannual management plan for sustainable trawl fisheries targeting giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Levant Sea (geographical subareas 24, 25, 26 and 27)

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 at levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY);

RECALLING that the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration (MedFish4Ever 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 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

RECALLING the United Nations 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, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels in the High Seas;

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

RECALLING that the MedFish4Ever Declaration calls upon Mediterranean riparian countries to enhance multilateral cooperation and implement actions to improve the sustainability of resources, particularly

with regard to data collection and scientific advice, the implementation of an ecosystem-based fisheries management framework, compliance and elimination of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, support to sustainable small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, and greater solidarity and coordination;

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

CONSIDERING the advice of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) at its twentieth session on adopting management rules (e.g. fishing authorizations) for giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp;

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;

CONSIDERING the socio-economic importance of fisheries 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 shall be established to this end;

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. The present recommendation establishes a multiannual management plan for sustainable trawl fishing activities in the Levant Sea (geographical subareas [GSAs] 24, 25, 26 and 27). Such multiannual management plan contains transitional measures that shall be applied until the adoption of permanent measures, based on the scientific advice provided by the SAC, in accordance with paragraph 14.
2. The multiannual management plan shall be consistent with the precautionary approach. It shall be designed to provide high long-term yields consistent with MSY and to guarantee a low risk of stock collapse while maintaining sustainable and relatively stable fisheries.
3. Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) whose vessels are actively fishing in GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27 agree to implement such a multiannual management plan for the fisheries concerned and in accordance with the general and specific objectives and measures set by this recommendation.
4. A set of transitional precautionary management measures for the Levant Sea shall be developed in order to ensure that, pending formal scientific advice by the SAC, the stocks and fisheries are kept at biologically sustainable levels.
5. The CPCs whose vessels are actively fishing in GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27 agree to implement such transitional management measures for the fisheries concerned and in accordance with the general and specific objectives set by this recommendation.
6. The multiannual management plan shall also pursue the reduction of IUU fishing activities in GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27.

Geographical scope

7. The multiannual management plan established by the present recommendation shall apply to GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27.

Definitions

8. For the purpose of this recommendation:

- “Levant Sea” means GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27 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;
- “Vessel actively fishing” means any trawler targeting the key species listed in Annex 1 and entitled by the CPC whose flag it is flying to carry out specific fishing operations during a specified period, in a given area or for a given fishery under specific conditions;
- “Fishing day” means any continuous period of 24 hours, or part thereof, during which a vessel is present within GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27 and is searching for fish, shooting, setting, towing, hauling of a fishing gear, taking catch on board, transshipping, retaining on board, processing on board, transferring and landing fish and fishery products;
- “Key species” means marine organisms pertaining to the species as defined in Annex 1 of this recommendation;
- “Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing” or “IUU fishing” means the activities described in paragraph 3 of the 2001 FAO International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU), and following the provisions of Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7;
- “Designated landing point” means ports, or places close to the shore, designated by the CPCs according to 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, including offshore terminals and other installations for landing, transshipping, packaging, processing, refuelling or resupplying fishing vessels, where landings, transshipments, packaging and/or processing operations of fishery products are permitted.

PART II

Specific objectives of the multiannual management plan and transitional measures for the Levant Sea

9. The operational objective of the multiannual management plan shall be to maintain fishing mortality for key species (Annex 1), as defined by CPCs with the assistance of the GFCM, 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.

10. The objective of the transitional measures for key species (Annex 1) in the Levant Sea is to prepare for a future management plan while reducing the risk that, in the absence of relevant scientific assessment, the biomass level of the stocks could drop below biologically sustainable levels, with negative consequences also on the socio-economic viability of the fisheries concerned.

11. Pending the identification of biological 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 exerted during the years 2014–

2017 for the exploitation of key species in the Levant Sea. This reference period shall be without prejudice to the discussions to take place in the context of the working group referred to under paragraph 49 of this recommendation.

12. A GFCM working group shall be established in 2020, 30 calendar days following the twenty-second session of the SAC, in order to develop measures for the management of the key species listed in Annex 1, taking into consideration the efforts made by CPCs to manage the relevant fisheries as well as the amount of historical catches, and to apply in some cases stricter rules than those defined in this recommendation, also based on socio-economic considerations.

13. By way of derogation from paragraph 11, CPCs that intend to target the key species referred to in Annex 1 shall be allowed to submit fleet development plans during the time period between the entry into force of this recommendation and the adoption of permanent management measures by the GFCM. Such fleet development plans shall be assessed by the SAC and adopted by the GFCM.

14. The SAC shall, upon the availability of updated data, regularly assess the state of the key species and, in particular, establish the level of current fishing mortality and provide the GFCM with the necessary elements for setting biological reference points.

15. Operational objectives in terms of fighting against IUU fishing activities relevant for the key species fisheries shall be developed as defined in Part VI of this recommendation.

16. At its forty-fourth session, the GFCM shall adopt long-term management measures allowing for the achievement of the objectives set out in paragraph 1, in complement to or in replacement of the measures referred to in Part IV.

PART III

Scientific monitoring, adaptation and revision of the plan

17. CPCs shall ensure annually an adequate scientific monitoring of the status of the key species in the Levant Sea.

18. The SAC shall provide, on an annual basis as from 2019, advice on the status of the key species in the Levant Sea, including specific objectives to maintain fishing mortality within agreed precautionary fishing mortality reference points and to maintain or restore the stocks of the key species at levels that can produce MSY in accordance with the objectives set out in paragraph 1.

19. The SAC shall assess the biological, economic and social implications of implementing several management scenarios with the objective of restoring and maintaining the species population above levels that can produce MSY.

20. Based on the SAC advice, the GFCM may review the content of the multiannual management plan.

21. Where SAC advice indicates that the general or specific objectives of the multiannual plan are not being met, the GFCM shall decide on additional and/or alternative management measures to contribute to achieving those objectives.

22. Where, for any reason (e.g. lack of appropriate data), the SAC is not in a position to provide an accurate advice on the stock status of the key species listed in Annex 1 and on their exploitation levels, the GFCM shall decide on the most appropriate management measures to ensure the sustainability of the fisheries. Such measures shall be based on SAC advice, in accordance with the precautionary approach

and taking into consideration environmental and socio-economic elements in a way that guarantees the sustainability of the fisheries.

23. In 2020, the SAC shall evaluate the effectiveness of the measures already applied at the national level and advise on whether these measures are adequate and possibly applicable to adjacent GSAs.

24. For the purpose of providing advice for the revision/adaptation of the multiannual management plan, the CPCs and the SAC shall facilitate the collation of existing relevant data and the collection of additional relevant data (including research survey data) and organize adequate workshops. For this purpose, the SAC shall promote scientific cooperation and a harmonised approach amongst all Levant Sea riparian countries.

PART IV

Fleet management measures

25. Vessels authorized to fish for the key species listed in Annex 1 in the Levant Sea shall be listed by the CPC whose flag they are flying. Vessels not listed by the CPC whose flag they are flying shall not catch, retain on board, tranship, land, store or sell any of the key species.

26. CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat not later than 31 January of each year, the list of the vessels flying their flag and actively fishing for the key species listed in Annex 1 for the current year or for the forthcoming years. This list shall include, for each vessel, the information referred to in Annex 1 of Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2 on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom trawling fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily, pending the development and adoption of a multiannual management plan.

27. The vessels actively fishing for the key species listed in Annex 1 shall comply with the obligations established under Resolution GFCM/37/2013/2 on guidelines on the management of fishing capacity in the GFCM area of application and provide national authorities with a detailed report of their fishing activities, including as minimum requirements: operating days, operating area and total catch of key species. This information shall be transmitted to the GFCM Secretariat at least on a yearly basis.

28. CPCs may designate additional spatial/temporal restrictions to those already established, where fishing activities may be banned or restricted in order to protect aggregation areas of juveniles of the key species. Where applicable, CPCs shall notify to the GFCM Secretariat, by 1 January 2019, the list of these areas and the restrictions applied.

PART V

Management of fishing effort

29. CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, for the first time not later than 1 June 2019, the list of all vessels actively fishing for the key species listed in Annex 1 together with their historic level of fishing effort.

30. Such list shall contain, for each vessel, the information referred to in Annex 1 of Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2.

31. Any fishing vessel not included in the list established under paragraph 26 above shall not be allowed to fish for, retain on board or land any quantity of the key species greater than 3 percent of the total live weight catch retained on board, if the vessel is engaged in a fishing trip in any of the GSAs 24, 25, 26 or 27.

32. CPCs shall promptly notify the GFCM Secretariat of any addition to, deletion from and/or modification of the fishing fleets for the key species, as identified under paragraph 27, at any time such changes may occur.

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

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

35. 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

36. CPCs shall establish a mechanism to ensure that vessels actively fishing in the Levant Sea declare all catches and bycatch of the key species listed in Annex 1. The obligation to declare catches shall apply irrespective of the volume of the catch.

37. CPCs shall, not later than 31 December 2020, communicate to the GFCM Secretariat a map of the fishing grounds exploited by their fishing vessels authorized to catch the key species listed in Annex 1. Such map shall be prepared using the VMS data transmitted to CPCs by their authorized vessels.

38. Each CPC shall designate landing points where the landings by vessels actively fishing for key species in the Levant Sea shall take place.

39. For each designated port, CPCs shall specify permitted landing and transshipping times and places.

40. CPCs shall carry out inspections to take place on the basis of a risk analysis.

41. It shall be prohibited to land or tranship from fishing vessels any quantity of key species fished in the Levant Sea at any place other than ports designated by CPCs in accordance with paragraph 38 above.

42. CPCs shall transmit to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 30 November each year, any change to the list of designated landing points where landings of key species in the Levant Sea may take place.

43. CPCs shall engage in cooperation for the fight against IUU fishing, in particular by sharing information and gathering intelligence to fight against illegal activities.

44. Part VI is without prejudice to Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7 on a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application.

PART VII

Monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) programme

45. All vessels above 10 metres length overall actively fishing for the key species listed in Annex 1 shall be equipped with vessel monitoring system (VMS) or any other geopositioning system allowing

control authorities to track their activities.

46. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM logbook, all the catches of key species shall be indicated in the logbook irrespectively of the live weight of the catch.

47. Upon request of CPCs, with the assistance of the GFCM Secretariat, the GFCM shall establish, in 2019, a pilot project with a view to establishing an observation and inspection programme in order to ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures contained in this recommendation.

48. Such observation and inspection programme shall be based on the results of the pilot project and adopted before the end of 2020. It shall comprise, *inter alia*, the following elements:

- a) High sea inspections;
- b) Procedures for an effective investigation of an alleged violation of the conservation and management measures contained 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;
- g) Observer programmes.

49. 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 2 of this recommendation.

List of key species to be considered in the current recommendation

Name	Scientific name	GSA			
		24	25	26	27
Giant red shrimp	<i>Aristaeomorpha foliacea</i>	X	X	X	X
Blue and red shrimp	<i>Aristeus antennatus</i>	X	X	X	X

Terms of reference for the Working Group on integrated MCS measures for fisheries targeting key species in the Levant Sea

The working group referred to in paragraph 49, shall:

1. be supported by the GFCM Secretariat;
2. establish a schedule for the development of its work, and hold at least one meeting in 2019, before the next meeting of the Compliance Committee (CoC);
3. invite observers attending GFCM meetings, the FAO, and other regional fisheries organizations to participate in its meetings; and
4. report on its conclusions and opinions to the CoC.

The mandate of the working group shall cover the elements described in Part VII of this recommendation.

Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/4 on a multiannual management plan for sustainable trawl fisheries targeting giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Ionian Sea (geographical subareas 19, 20 and 21)

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 at levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY);

RECALLING that the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration (MedFish4Ever 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 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

RECALLING that the United Nations 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, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas;

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

RECALLING that the MedFish4Ever Declaration calls upon Mediterranean riparian countries to enhance multilateral cooperation and implement actions to improve the sustainability of resources, particularly

with regard to data collection and scientific advice, the implementation of an ecosystem-based fisheries management framework, compliance and elimination of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, support to sustainable small-scale fisheries and aquaculture and greater solidarity and coordination;

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

CONSIDERING the advice of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) at its twentieth session to adopt management rules (e.g. fishing authorizations) for giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp;

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

CONSIDERING the socio-economic importance of fisheries 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 shall be established to this end;

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. The present recommendation establishes a multiannual management plan for sustainable trawling fishing activities in the Ionian Sea (geographical subareas [GSAs] 19, 20 and 21). Such multiannual management plan contains transitional measures that shall be applied until the adoption of permanent measures based on the scientific advice provided by the SAC, in accordance with paragraph 14.
2. The multiannual management plan shall be consistent with the precautionary approach. It shall be designed to provide high long-term yields consistent with MSY and to guarantee a low risk of stocks collapse while maintaining sustainable and relatively stable fisheries.
3. Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) whose vessels are actively fishing in GSAs 19, 20 and 21 agree to implement such a multiannual management plan for the fisheries concerned and in accordance with the general and specific objectives and measures set by this recommendation.
4. A set of transitional precautionary management measures for the Ionian Sea shall be developed in order to ensure that, pending formal scientific advice by the SAC, the stocks and fisheries are kept at biologically sustainable levels.
5. The CPCs whose vessels are actively fishing in GFCM GSAs 19, 20 and 21 agree to implement such transitional management measures for the fisheries concerned and in accordance with the general and specific objectives set by this recommendation.
6. The multiannual management plan shall also pursue the reduction of IUU fishing activities in GSAs 19, 20 and 21.

Geographical scope

7. The multiannual management plan established by the present recommendation shall apply to GSAs 19, 20 and 21.

Definitions

8. For the purpose of this recommendation:

- “Ionian Sea” means the GSAs 19, 20 and 21 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;
- “Vessel actively fishing” means any trawler targeting in the Ionian sea the key species listed in Annex I and entitled by the CPC whose flag it is flying to carry out specific fishing operations, during a specified period, in a given area or for a given fishery under specific conditions;
- “Fishing day” means any continuous period of 24 hours, or part thereof, during which a vessel is present within GSAs 19, 20 and 21 and is searching for fish, shooting, setting, towing, hauling of a fishing gear, taking catch on board, transshipping, retaining on board, processing on board, transferring and landing fish and fishery products;
- “Key species” means marine organisms pertaining to the species as defined in Annex 1 of the current recommendation;
- “Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing” or “IUU fishing” means the activities described in paragraph 3 of the 2001 FAO International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU) and following the provisions of Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7;
- “Designated landing point” means ports, or places close to the shore, designated by the CPCs according to 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, 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.

PART II

Specific objectives of the multiannual management plan and transitional measures for the Ionian Sea

9. The operational objective of the multiannual management plan shall be to maintain fishing mortality for key species (Annex 1), as defined by CPCs with the assistance of GFCM, 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.

10. The objective of the transitional measures for key species (Annex 1) in the Ionian Sea is to prepare for a future management plan while reducing the risk that, in the absence of relevant scientific assessment, the biomass level of the stocks could drop below biologically sustainable levels, with negative consequences also on the socio-economic viability of the fisheries concerned.

11. Pending the identification of biological 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 exerted during the years 2014-2017 for the exploitation of key species in the Ionian Sea. This reference period shall be without prejudice to the discussions to take place in the context of the working group referred to under paragraph 49 of this recommendation.

12. A GFCM working group shall be established in 2020, 30 calendar days following the twenty-second session of the SAC, in order to develop measures for the management of the key species listed in Annex 1, taking into consideration the efforts made by CPCs to manage the relevant fisheries as well as the amount of historical catches, and to apply in some cases stricter rules than those defined in this recommendation, also based on socio-economic considerations.

13. By way of derogation from paragraph 11, CPCs that intend to target the key species referred to in Annex 1 shall be allowed to submit fleet development plans during the time period between the entry into force of this recommendation and the adoption of permanent management measures by the GFCM. Such fleet development plans shall be assessed by the SAC and adopted by the GFCM.

14. The SAC shall, upon the availability of updated data, regularly assess the state of the key species and in particular, establish the level of current fishing mortality and provide the GFCM with the necessary elements for setting biological reference points.

15. Operational objectives in terms of fighting against IUU fishing activities relevant for the key species fisheries shall be developed as defined in Part VI of this recommendation.

16. At its forty-fourth session, the GFCM shall adopt long-term management measures for the achievement of the objectives set out in paragraph 1, in complement to or in replacement of the measures referred to in Part IV.

PART III

Scientific monitoring, adaptation and revision of the plan

17. CPCs shall ensure annually an adequate scientific monitoring of the status of the key species in the Ionian Sea.

18. The SAC shall provide, on an annual basis as from 2019, advice on the status of the key species in the Ionian Sea including specific objectives to maintain fishing mortality within agreed precautionary fishing mortality reference points and to maintain or restore the stocks of the key species at levels that can produce MSY in accordance with the objectives set out in paragraph 1.

19. The SAC shall assess the biological, economic and social implications of implementing several management scenarios with the objective of restoring and maintaining the species population above levels that can produce MSY.

20. Based on the SAC advice, the GFCM may review the content of the multiannual management plan.

21. Where SAC advice indicates that the general or specific objectives of the multiannual plan are not being met, the GFCM shall decide on additional and/or alternative management measures to contribute to achieving those objectives.

22. Where, for any reason (e.g. lack of appropriate data), the SAC is not in a position to provide an accurate advice on the stock status of the key species listed in Annex 1 and on their exploitation levels, the GFCM shall decide on the most appropriate management measures to ensure the sustainability of the fisheries. Such measures shall be based on SAC advice in accordance with the precautionary approach and taking into consideration environmental and socio-economic elements in a way that guarantees the sustainability of the fisheries.

23. In 2020, the SAC shall evaluate the effectiveness of the measures already applied at the national level and advise on whether these measures are adequate and possibly applicable to adjacent GSAs.

24. For the purpose of providing advice for the revision/adaptation of the multiannual management plan, the CPCs and the SAC shall facilitate the collation of existing relevant data and the collection of additional relevant data (including research survey data) and organise adequate workshops. For this purpose, the SAC shall promote scientific cooperation and a harmonised approach amongst all Ionian Sea riparian countries.

PART IV

Fleet management measures

25. Vessels authorised to fish for the key species listed in Annex 1 in the Ionian Sea shall be listed by the CPC whose flag they are flying. Vessels not listed by the CPC whose flag they are flying shall not catch, retain on board, transship, land, store or sell any of the key species.

26. CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat not later than 31 January of each year, the list of the vessels flying their flag and actively fishing for the key species listed in Annex 1 for the current year or for the forthcoming years. This list shall include, for each vessel, the information referred to in Annex 1 of Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2 on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom trawling fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily, pending the development and adoption of a multiannual management plan..

27. The vessels actively fishing for the key species listed in Annex I shall comply with the obligations established under Resolution GFCM/37/2013/2 on guidelines on the management of fishing capacity in the GFCM area of application and provide national authorities with a detailed report of their fishing activities, including as minimum requirements: operating days, operating area and total catch of key species. This information shall be transmitted to the GFCM Secretariat at least on a yearly basis.

28. CPCs may designate additional spatial/temporal restrictions to those already established where fishing activities may be banned or restricted in order to protect aggregation areas of juveniles of the key species. Where applicable, CPCs shall notify to the GFCM Secretariat, by 1 January 2019 the list of these areas and the restrictions applied.

PART V

Management of fishing effort

29. CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat for the first time, no later than 1 June 2019, the list of all their vessels actively fishing for the key species listed in Annex 1 together with their historic level of fishing effort.

30. Such list shall contain, for each vessel, the information referred to in Annex 1 of Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2.

31. Any fishing vessel not included in the list established under paragraph 26 above shall not be allowed to fish for, retain on board or land any quantity of the key species greater than 3 percent of the total live weight catch retained on board, if the vessel is engaged in a fishing trip in any of the GSAs 19, 20 or 21.

32. CPCs shall promptly notify the GFCM Secretariat of any addition to, deletion from and/or modification of the fishing fleets for key species, as identified under paragraph 27, at any time such changes may occur.

33. The GFCM Secretariat shall maintain and update the list of fishing vessels authorized to fish for the key species and publish it on the GFCM website in a manner that is consistent with GFCM data

confidentiality policy and procedures.

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

35. 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

36. CPCs shall establish a mechanism to ensure that vessels actively fishing in the Ionian Sea declare all catches and bycatch of the key species listed in Annex 1. The obligation to declare catches shall apply irrespective of the volume of the catch.

37. CPCs shall, not later than 31 December 20[20], communicate to the GFCM Secretariat a map of the fishing grounds exploited by their fishing vessels authorized to catch the key species listed in Annex 1. Such map shall be prepared using the VMS data transmitted to CPCs by their authorized vessels.

38. Each CPC shall designate landing points where the landings by vessels actively fishing for key species in the Ionian Sea shall take place.

39. For each designated port, CPCs shall specify permitted landing and transshipping times and places.

40. CPCs shall carry out inspections to take place on the basis of a risk analysis.

41. It shall be prohibited to land or tranship from fishing vessels any quantity of key species fished in the Ionian Sea at any place other than ports designated by CPCs in accordance with paragraph 38 above.

42. CPCs shall transmit to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 30 November each year, any changes to the list of designated landing points where landings of key species in the Ionian Sea may take place.

43. CPCs shall engage in cooperation for the fight against IUU fishing, in particular by sharing information and gathering intelligence to fight against illegal activities.

44. Part VI is without prejudice to Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7 on a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application.

PART VII

Monitoring control and surveillance programme

45. All vessels above 10 metres length overall actively fishing for the key species listed in Annex 1 shall be equipped with vessel monitoring system (VMS) or any other geopositioning system allowing control authorities to track their activities.

46. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM logbook, all the catches of key species shall be indicated in the logbook irrespective of the live weight of the catch.

47. Upon request of CPCs with the assistance of the GFCM secretariat, the GFCM shall establish in 2019 a pilot project with a view to establishing an observation and inspection programme in order to

ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures contained in this recommendation.

48. Such observation and inspection programme shall be based on the results of the pilot project and adopted before the end of 2020. It shall comprise, *inter alia*, the following elements:

- a) High seas inspection;
- b) Procedures for an effective investigation of an alleged violation of the conservation and management measures contained 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;
- g) Observer programmes.

49. A working group shall be established to develop integrated MCS measures, in accordance with this recommendation. The tasks of the working group are defined in Annex 2 of this recommendation.

List of key species to be considered in the current recommendation

Name	Scientific name	GSA		
		19	20	21
Giant red shrimp	<i>Aristaeomorpha foliacea</i>	X	X	X
Blue and red shrimp	<i>Aristeus antennatus</i>	X	X	X

Terms of reference for the Working Group on integrated MCS measures for fisheries targeting key species in the Ionian Sea

The working group referred to in paragraph 49, shall:

- 1) be supported by the GFCM Secretariat;
- 2) establish a schedule for the development of its work, and hold at least one meeting in 2019, before the next meeting of the Compliance Committee (CoC);
- 3) invite observers attending GFCM meetings, the FAO, and other regional fisheries organizations to participate in its meetings; and
- 4) report in its conclusions and opinions to the CoC.

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

Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/5 on a multiannual management plan for bottom trawl fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16), repealing Recommendations GFCM/39/2015/2 and GFCM/40/2016/4

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);

CONSIDERING that the 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 the mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries;

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 geographical subareas (GSAs) 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16;

CONSIDERING that the state of the stocks as assessed by the SAC requires the development and adoption of management measures aimed at ensuring the conservation of demersal stocks in GSAs 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16, as soon as possible;

CONSIDERING the conclusions of the SAC Technical Workshop on bioeconomic assessment of management measures held in February 2016;

CONSIDERING the conclusions of the meeting of the Subregional Committee for the Central Mediterranean held in February 2016;

CONSIDERING the conclusions of the seventeenth session of the SAC (FAO headquarters, March 2015) and of the eighteenth session of the SAC (Cyprus, March 2016), in particular regarding the management of select fisheries in the Strait of Sicily;

NOTING that SAC concluded, at its eighteenth session, that the stocks of European hake are heavily overexploited and, in some cases, well below safe biological limits;

NOTING that many fisheries exploiting European hake in the Mediterranean exert a pressure over juveniles;

CONSIDERING Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/2 on the minimum mesh size in the codend of demersal trawl nets;

CONSIDERING Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7 concerning minimum standards for the establishment of a vessel monitoring system in the GFCM area of application;

CONSIDERING Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2 on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom trawling fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily, pending the development and adoption of a multiannual management plan;

CONSIDERING 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);

CONSIDERING Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/5 establishing a minimum conservation reference size for European hake in the Mediterranean Sea;

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

NOTING Resolution GFCM/41/2017/5 on a network of essential fish habitats in the GFCM area of application;

ADOPTS, in conformity with the provisions of 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. The present recommendation establishes a multiannual management plan for bottom trawl fisheries exploiting demersal stocks (hereafter “multiannual management plan”), including European hake and deep-water rose shrimp, in the marine waters of GSAs 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 (hereafter “Strait of Sicily”), 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.
2. This recommendation shall apply to bottom trawlers above 10 metres length overall.

Definitions

3. For the purpose of this recommendation:
 - a) “European hake” means fish belonging to the species *Merluccius merluccius*;
 - b) “Deep-water rose shrimp” means crustaceans belonging to the species *Parapenaeus longirostris*;
 - c) “Designated landing ports” means ports, or places close to the shore, designated in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/32/2008/1 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, refueling or resupplying of fishing vessels, where landings, transshipments, packaging and/or processing operations of fishery products are permitted; and

- d) “fishing authorization” means a fishing authorization entitling a vessel to engage in fishing activities for demersal stocks, including European hake and deep-water rose shrimp, during a specified period and in a given area.

PART II

Specific objectives and targets

Specific objectives

4. The multiannual management plan shall aim at contributing to the objectives mentioned in Article 2 and to the principles listed in Article 5 of the GFCM Agreement.

5. The multiannual management plan shall, in particular:

- a) Apply the precautionary approach to fisheries management;
- b) Ensure that exploitation levels of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp are at MSY by 2020 at the latest;
- c) Protect nursery areas and essential fish habitats that are important for the stocks of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily;
- d) Gradually eliminate discards, by avoiding and reducing, as far as possible, unwanted catches, and by gradually ensuring that all catches are landed;
- e) Provide for measures to adjust the fishing capacity of the fleets to levels of fishing mortality consistent with MSY, with a view to having economically viable fleets and without overexploiting marine biological resources.

Targets

6. The target fishing mortality ranges for the stocks of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp, as provided in Annex 1 to this recommendation, shall be reached by 2020 and maintained onwards.

PART III

Technical measures

Minimum conservation reference size

7. Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/5 establishing a minimum conservation reference size for European hake in the Mediterranean Sea shall apply.

8. The minimum conservation reference size for deep-water rose shrimp shall be set to 20 mm carapace length (CL).

9. Specimens of European hake and of deep-water rose shrimp smaller than the minimum conservation reference size defined in paragraph 7 shall not be caught, retained on board, transshipped, transferred, landed, stored, sold, displayed or offered for sale.

10. Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) shall communicate annually to the GFCM Secretariat the specific modalities they apply under the provisions of paragraph 7, 8 and 9 – including landing obligation – aiming at avoiding discards which are in force in some CPCs as well as landing inspection modalities when a flexibility scheme is foreseen at the national level.

11. In order to define additional appropriate spatio-temporal restrictions in view of the sustainable management of the stocks referred to in paragraph 1, CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 30 June 2019 and thereafter annually, the spatial restrictions in the waters under their jurisdiction that they apply with a view to protecting spawning and nursery areas for demersal stocks, including European hake and deep-water rose shrimp.

Fisheries restricted areas

12. Fisheries restricted areas (FRAs) shall be established for the conservation and management of the demersal stocks, including European hake and deep-water rose shrimp, in the three areas of the Strait of Sicily as defined in Annex 2.

13. Notwithstanding paragraph 2, any fishing activity with bottom trawlers irrespective of their overall length shall not be allowed in the FRAs defined in paragraph 12.

14. In order to avoid accidental access to the FRAs established in paragraph 12, buffer areas extending one nautical mile beyond the FRAs shall be established as defined in Annex 2.

15. For any fishing activity with bottom trawlers in the buffer areas established in paragraph 14, vessels shall ensure that their vessel monitoring system (VMS) is fully functional before entering the buffer zone. Those vessels not equipped with VMS transponder and aiming to fish in the buffer areas shall be equipped with any other geolocation system allowing control authorities to track their activities.

16. The SAC shall identify additional nursery areas of European hake in the entire Strait of Sicily.

17. The SAC shall also identify areas where discards of European hake and/or deep-sea rose shrimp below the minimum conservation reference size or juveniles are high.

Temporal closure

18. Notwithstanding paragraph 2, any fishing activity with bottom trawlers irrespective of their overall length shall not be allowed between the coast and the 200 metres depth isobath in GSA 14 (Gulf of Gabès). This closure shall apply every year from 1 July until 30 September.

PART IV

Fleet and effort management measures

19. Bottom trawlers exploiting demersal stocks including European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily shall only be allowed to carry out specific fishing activities 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 (see Annex 3). Such vessels shall be equipped with a VMS, in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7 concerning minimum standards for the establishment of a vessel monitoring system in the GFCM area of application.

20. The CPCs shall maintain and keep up-to-date a register of the above-mentioned fishing authorizations. Unless specifically provided for in the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework, the CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat:

- The list of operating vessels for which such authorization has been delivered for the following year(s), not later than 30 November of each year;
- A report on fishing activities carried out by the vessels referred to in paragraph 19, in an aggregated format, including the following minimum information: number of exploitation days, exploitation area, catches and discards of European hake and of deep-water rose shrimp, no later than 31 August of each year, starting from August 2019.

21. In order to facilitate the exchange of information regarding inspections to be done, the GFCM Secretariat shall provide the CPCs with access credentials to a secure website listing in real time the fishing vessels authorized to carry out fishing activities in a given fishery.

22. The CPCs that have introduced, since 2010, fishing capacity reduction measures or fishing effort restrictions, including through the establishment of spatial and/or temporal closures, shall be encouraged to ensure that such measures, or their effects, are maintained. The SAC shall be invited to formulate advice aiming at improving the efficiency of such measures.

23. The CPCs shall take the necessary measures to reduce the fishing mortality of European hake and of deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily and align them with the objectives and the timeline set out in paragraph 6. Measures should be considered in terms of number of fishing days, fishing vessels and catch limits.

PART V

National management plans

24. In order to ensure adequate conservation of demersal stocks, the CPCs shall adopt fisheries management measures or national management plans in the Strait of Sicily.

25. The CPCs shall notify the GFCM Secretariat, from 31 January 2019, of the management measures or management plans adopted at the national level. Where appropriate, should these measures be modified, the CPCs shall communicate such modifications by 31 January of the following year.

PART VI

Specific measures to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities

26. The CPCs shall establish a mechanism to ensure that the vessels authorized to fish for European hake and/or deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily shall record all their catches of European hake and/or deep-water rose shrimp.

27. Each CPC shall designate landing ports in which landings of European hake and/or deep-water rose shrimp from the Strait of Sicily may take place.

28. The CPCs shall specify, for each designated landing port, the permitted landing and transshipping times and places. The CPCs shall also ensure inspection coverage during all landing and transshipping times and at all landing and transshipping places.

29. It shall be prohibited to land or transship from fishing vessels any quantity of European hake and/or deep-water rose shrimp fished in the Strait of Sicily at any place other than landing ports designated in accordance with paragraph 26.

30. The CPCs shall transmit to the GFCM Secretariat no later than 30 November 2018 a list of the designated landing ports in which landings of European hake and/or deep-water rose shrimp from the Strait of Sicily may take place. Any subsequent change that may occur to this list shall be promptly notified to the GFCM Secretariat.

31. The CPCs shall engage to cooperate on the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, in particular through sharing information and gathering intelligence to fight against IUU fishing activities and organized crime.

PART VII

Monitoring, control and surveillance programmes

32. The CPCs, through the GFCM, shall establish or maintain an observation and inspection programme to ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures contained in this recommendation. Such programme may comprise *inter alia* the following elements:

- a) High seas inspection;
- b) Procedures for an effective investigation of an alleged violation of the conservation and management measures contained 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;
- g) Observer programmes.

33. 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) shall apply for a period of three years from the date of the adoption of this recommendation.

PART VIII

Scientific monitoring, adaptation and revision of the multiannual management plan

34. The CPCs shall ensure adequate annual scientific monitoring of European hake and of deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily.

35. The SAC shall provide advice on the status of European hake and of deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily. Such advice shall include reference points in terms of fishing mortality at levels which can produce the MSY at the latest by 2020 and safeguard points.

36. The SAC shall assess the biological, economic and social implications of implementing several management scenarios with the objective of restoring and maintaining the populations of harvested species above levels which can produce the MSY.

37. The SAC shall advise on the most appropriate minimum and/or maximum landing sizes for elasmobranchs species affected by the fisheries exploiting European hake and/or deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily.

38. The SAC shall advise on the most appropriate technical measures to improve the selectivity of bottom trawlers targeting European hake and/or deep-water rose shrimps stocks.

39. The SAC shall identify where appropriate nursery areas beyond 200 metres depth in GSA 14 (Gulf of Gabès).

40. Whenever the GFCM, on the basis of advice from the SAC, finds that the target fishing mortality rates specified in paragraph 6 are no longer appropriate to achieve the objectives detailed in paragraph 5, it shall revise those parameters accordingly.

41. Where the scientific advice indicates that the general or specific objectives of the multiannual management plan are not being met, the GFCM shall decide on additional and/or alternative management measures to ensure that those objectives are achieved.

42. Where for whatever reason (e.g. lack of appropriate data) the SAC is not in a position of providing an accurate advice on the state of the European hake and of deep-water rose shrimp and on their exploitation levels, the GFCM shall decide on the most appropriate management measures to ensure the sustainability of the fishery. These measures shall be based on SAC advice taking into consideration socio-economic elements.

43. For the purpose of providing advice for the development of the multiannual management plan, the SAC shall organize adequate workshops. To this purpose, the SAC shall promote scientific cooperation and a harmonized approach among all countries around the Strait of Sicily.

PART IX
Final provisions

44. This multiannual management plan remains in force for three years from the date of its adoption.
45. This recommendation repeals and replaces Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2 and Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/4.

**Target fishing mortality for European hake and deep-water rose shrimp
in the Strait of Sicily**

Stock	Target fishing mortality range
European hake in the Strait of Sicily	0.12–0.18
Deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily	0.84–0.93

Geographical coordinates of fisheries restricted areas (FRAs)

FRA 1: East of Adventure Bank

Fisheries restricted area	
Latitude	Longitude
37° 23,850' N	12° 30,072' E
37° 23,884' N	12° 48,282' E
37° 11,567' N	12° 48,305' E
37° 11,532' N	12° 30,095' E

Buffer area	
Latitude	Longitude
37° 13,041' N	13° 16,672' E
37° 13,049' N	13° 37,422' E
36° 58,723' N	13° 37,424' E
36° 58,715' N	13° 16,682' E

FRA 2: West of Gela Basin

Fisheries restricted area	
Latitude	Longitude
37° 12,040' N	13° 17,925' E
37° 12,047' N	13° 36,170' E
36° 59,725' N	13° 36,175' E
36° 59,717' N	13° 17,930' E

Buffer area	
Latitude	Longitude
36° 13,624' N	15° 12,102' E
36° 13,624' N	15° 27,298' E
35° 58,342' N	15° 27,294' E
35° 58,342' N	15° 12,106' E

FRA 3: East of Malta Bank

Fisheries restricted area	
Latitude	Longitude
36° 12,621' N	15° 13,338' E
36° 12,621' N	15° 26,062' E
35° 59,344' N	15° 26,062' E
35° 59,344' N	15° 13,338' E

Buffer area	
Latitude	Longitude
37° 24,849' N	12° 28,814' E
37° 24,888' N	12° 49,536' E
37° 10,567' N	12° 49,559' E
37° 10,528' N	12° 28,845' E

Subject to more detailed provisions under the GFCM data collection programme, the list referred to in paragraph 21 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 (indicate Y/N)
- Vessel type, length overall (LOA) and gross tonnage (GT) and/or gross registered tonnage (GRT) and engine power expressed in kW
- Name and address of owner(s) and/or charter and/or operator(s)
- Main target species
- Main gear used for European hake and deep-water rose shrimp and fleet segment allocation
- Time period authorized for fishing with bottom trawl or any other gear likely to fish European hake and/or deep-water rose shrimp (if any of such authorization)

Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/6 on an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside the waters under national jurisdiction in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16), amending Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/8

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 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;

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 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);

NOTING that Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/5 on a multiannual management plan for bottom trawl fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16), repealing Recommendations GFCM/39/2015/2 and GFCM/40/2016/4, repeals and replaces Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/4;

CONSIDERING that it is appropriate to align the duration of the international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside the waters under national jurisdiction in the Strait of Sicily to the provisions of Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/5;

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

MODIFICATION OF RECOMMENDATION GFCM/41/2017/8

1. Paragraph 26 of Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/8 shall be modified as follows:

“This recommendation shall be implemented for a period of at least three years”.

Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/7 on a regional research programme on blue crab in the Mediterranean Sea

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 the 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 at levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY);

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

CONSIDERING the socio-economic impact in the Mediterranean Sea of fisheries exploiting blue crab, which is considered as a non-indigenous species of commercial interest that constitutes a fishery resource providing profits for local communities;

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

PART I

Objectives, scope and definitions

Objectives of the research programme and of the transitional measures

1. This recommendation shall establish a regional research programme towards the sustainable exploitation of blue crab in the Mediterranean Sea (hereafter “regional research programme”) aimed at ensuring socio-economic sustainability.
2. This recommendation applies to all commercial fishing activities exploiting blue crab in the Mediterranean Sea.
3. The regional research programme established by this recommendation shall support the work of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC).
4. Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) who are actively fishing in the Mediterranean Sea agree to implement the regional research programme in accordance with the objectives of this recommendation.

Geographical scope

5. The regional research programme established by this recommendation shall apply to the Mediterranean Sea.

Definition

6. For the purpose of this recommendation, “blue crab” means the species *Portunus segnis* and *Callinectes sapidus*.

PART II

Operational and specific objectives

7. The operational objective of this recommendation shall be to improve scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge of the fisheries exploiting blue crab by establishing a regional research programme on blue crab.
8. The specific objective of this recommendation shall be to collect data on fishing activities in order to improve research and scientific knowledge for the sustainable exploitation of the stock, aiming at maintaining the stock at MSY levels as well as the socio-economic viability of blue crab fisheries.
9. The SAC, at its twenty-third session in 2021, shall assess the outcomes of the regional research programme established by this recommendation. The SAC shall report to the GFCM at its forty-fifth session in 2021, and, if deemed necessary, present proposals for the adaptation of the measures set by this recommendation and for complementary management and control measures.
10. Based on the recommendations and advice under paragraph 9, the GFCM, at its forty-fifth session, may adapt these measures in accordance with the objectives set out in Parts I and II of this recommendation.

PART III
Regional research programme and scientific monitoring

11. CPCs with fishing activities targeting blue crab shall ensure that a mechanism for adequate scientific monitoring of blue crab catches in the Mediterranean Sea is duly in place, with a view to facilitating the implementation of the regional research programme and to allowing the SAC to provide descriptive information and advice on at least the following:

- a) deployed fishing effort (e.g. number of fishing days/week) and overall catch levels at the national or supranational levels, indicating the fishing gear used; and
- b) biological and socio-economic effects of alternative management scenarios, including input/output and/or technical measures, such as fishing gear/environmental impacts, as proposed by CPCs.

12. The GFCM Secretariat shall provide terms of reference, including costs, services and other requirements to support the implementation of a research programme on blue crab in the Mediterranean Sea, as described in Annex 1 of this recommendation. The regional research programme shall be launched in 2019.

PART IV
Final provisions

13. These measures shall be assessed by the SAC and, if necessary, reviewed by the GFCM at its forty-fifth session in 2021.

14. In light of the results of the regional research programme referred to in Part III of this recommendation, the GFCM may propose and adopt new appropriate management and control measures, including the monitoring of fishing activities and catches.

Key elements of the regional research programme on blue crab in the Mediterranean Sea

Introduction

There is high need for scientific and research projects aimed to fill gaps of knowledge on blue crab as a fishery resource.

Main features of the regional research programme on blue crab in the Mediterranean Sea

- Clear objectives defined in advance (e.g. biomass in tonnes, in number of km², spatio-temporal distribution patterns);
- Priority given to the collection of useful data for the provision of scientific advice in support of management (length, age, life cycle);
- Combination of fishery-dependent and fishery-independent sources of information to ensure a regular monitoring;
- All CPCs should be involved;
- The regional research programme should also provide guidelines and facilitate harmonization, standardization of protocols, coordination and comparison of the results obtained by past, ongoing and future national, regional and international research programmes addressing blue crab.

Work packages

Work packages are designed to address the main aspects mentioned above as well as the need to evaluate the social and economic aspects of the blue crab fishery in the context of the sustainable management and exploitation of the stock.

Work Package 1 – Biology and ecology

Work Package 2 – Fishery-independent data collection – Surveys-at-sea

Work Package 3 – Fishery-dependent data collection

Work Package 4 – Stock assessment

Work Package 5 – Socio-economic elements

Work Package 6 – Management proposals

Main objectives of each work package

WP 1 – Biology and ecology of blue crab, including demography. Biology: studies on size, density, abundance, biomass, recruitment, growth, reproduction, physiology, environmental parameters, habitat, feeding and bycatch surveys. Ecology: genetics, interactions with other species, impacts of fishing gear on the marine environment.

WP 2 – Fishery-independent data collection through multiannual demersal beam trawl/dredge surveys-at-sea, e.g. biomass and abundance indices, size/age distribution, bycatch.

WP 3 – Fishery-dependent data collection through port sampling (e.g. landings, length/distribution, fishing techniques used and vessels engaged in the fishing activity, value), and through observers on board (e.g. bycatch, days at sea).

WP 4 – Stock assessment: investigation on methodologies for assessing the status of blue crab including by compiling historical data.

WP 5 – Socio-economic elements: socio-economic survey on the sector, trade, markets and development of economic indicators, external aspects affecting the fisheries, economic sustainability of related fishing gears.

WP 6 – Management proposals: identification of possible additional measures through management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the sustainability of the blue crab fisheries.

Implementation of the regional research programme

The GFCM shall:

- Assess progress in the different work packages;
- Define standardized methods (e.g. in ageing) as well as research protocols, and Organize capacity-building activities.

Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/8 on further emergency measures in 2019-2021 for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subareas 17 and 18)

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 the 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);

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”;

NOTING that the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) has considered that the stocks of anchovy and sardine are distributed in geographical subarea (GSA) 17 and in GSA 18 and has carried out the first joint assessments at its eighteenth session;

NOTING that the revision of input data and the benchmark assessment for sardine and anchovy in GSA 17 and GSA 18 were undertaken in 2015–2016 and final stock assessment models based on the revised data were provided by the Working Group on Stock Assessment of Small Pelagic Species (WGSASP) in November 2017;

CONSIDERING that the SAC, at its twentieth session (June 2018, Morocco), concluded that both anchovy and sardine stocks in GSA 17 and GSA 18 are overexploited and in overexploitation with F/F_{msy} at 2.23 and 2.77 respectively and advised once again to decrease fishing mortality;

CONSIDERING that fishing mortality is an overall measurement system, which can be adjusted by applying reductions in terms of fishing capacity and/or fishing effort;

CONSIDERING that the emergency measures for 2017 and 2018 (Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/3 establishing further emergency measures in 2017 and 2018 for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea [geographical subareas 17 and 18]) have expired, that the Commission shall update the current management plan (Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1 on a multiannual management plan for fisheries exploiting small pelagic stocks in geographical subarea 17 [northern Adriatic Sea] and on transitional conservation measures for fisheries exploiting small pelagic stocks in geographical subarea 18 [southern Adriatic Sea]) with the latest scientific advice to ensure implementation in 2022 at the latest, and that, due to the particularly bad state of anchovy stocks, it is necessary to adopt new emergency measures to reduce the fishing mortality of the small pelagic stocks in 2019, 2020 and 2021;

CONSIDERING that, in accordance with paragraph 18 of Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/3, if the SAC concludes that anchovy and sardine are still overexploited, the Commission may adopt more stringent measures aiming at ensuring that the exploitation levels of small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea are at MSY by 2020.

NOTING that acoustic survey data for both small pelagic species, sardine and anchovy, indicate a declining trend in total biomass;

NOTING that the latest assessment of stock status made by the SAC in 2018 also indicates a further declining trend in spawning stock biomass (SSB) of anchovy since 2005 and a decline in SSB of sardine compared to the assessment of 2017;

NOTING that, since temporal restrictions are considered to have a beneficial effect on fisheries, a closed period during the spawning season of anchovy and sardine in the Adriatic Sea shall be applied;

CONSIDERING that, due to stock dynamics, it may take several years to observe the effects of the management measures adopted and applied to date on the stock status of small pelagic species in the Adriatic Sea but that this delay should not be taken as a justification to delay action to improve the status of these stocks;

CONSIDERING that the GFCM may envisage to adopt additional measures including catch limitations;

CONSIDERING the socio-economic importance of fisheries exploiting sardine and anchovy in the Adriatic Sea and the need to ensure their sustainability;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/27/2002/1 on the management of selected demersal and small pelagic species and, notably, paragraph 2 therein;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/30/2006/1 on the management of certain fisheries exploiting demersal and small pelagic species and, notably, paragraph 2 and 3 therein;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1 on a multiannual management plan for fisheries exploiting small pelagic stocks in geographical subarea 17 (northern Adriatic Sea) and on transitional conservation measures for fisheries exploiting small pelagic stocks in geographical subarea 18 (southern Adriatic Sea);

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/38/2014/1 on precautionary and emergency measures for 2015 on small pelagic stocks in geographical subarea 17, amending Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1;

NOTING that, under Recommendation GFCM/38/2014/1, a reduction of fishing effort as well as spatio-temporal closures was applied in 2015 for vessels fishing for small pelagic stocks in GSA 17;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/1 establishing further precautionary and emergency measures in 2016 for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subareas 17 and 18);

NOTING that, under Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/1, a reduction of fishing effort was applied in 2016 for fishing vessels targeting anchovy in GSA 17 and spatio-temporal closures were applied in 2016 for vessels fishing small pelagic stocks in GSA 17 and GSA 18;

ADOPTS, in conformity with the provisions of Articles 5 b), 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 ensure that exploitation levels of small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea are reduced in order to achieve MSY by 2020 and to ensure the stability, in socio-economic terms, of fishing fleets targeting small pelagics.
2. The present recommendation shall apply to GSA 17 and GSA 18 (Adriatic Sea) until 2021.
3. For the purpose of this recommendation:
 - a) “anchovy” means fish pertaining to the *Engraulis encrasicolus* species;
 - b) “sardine” means fish pertaining to the *Sardina pilchardus* species;
 - c) “small pelagics” means stocks of anchovy and sardine;
 - d) “pelagic trawler” means fishing vessel operating single or in pair with pelagic trawl net; and
 - e) “purse seiner” means fishing vessel operating with purse seine net for small pelagic species.

PART II

Emergency management measures

4. In 2019, 2020 and 2021, contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) shall not exceed the level of catches for small pelagics exerted in 2014 as reported in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/3 on the implementation of the GFCM Task 1 statistical matrix and repealing Resolution GFCM/31/2007/1.
5. The provisions under paragraph 4 shall not apply to CPCs with catches below 2 500 tonnes in 2014 and these CPCs shall not exceed catches of 2 500 tonnes in any of the three years covered by this recommendation.
6. In addition, in 2019, 2020 and 2021, the CPCs with declared catches over 2 500 tonnes in 2014 shall implement a progressive 5 percent reduction each year starting from the level of catches of small pelagics in 2014, as reported in Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/3.
7. If the catch limit set in paragraph 4 is exceeded in any given year, the GFCM shall recommend appropriate management measures compensating the overcatch.

Fishing effort

8. Notwithstanding the fishing effort established under paragraph 27 of Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1 and under Recommendation GFCM/38/2014/1, CPCs shall ensure that their fishing vessels targeting small pelagics shall not exceed 180 fishing days per year, with a maximum of 144 fishing days targeting sardine and of 144 fishing days targeting anchovy.

Closures

9. In 2019, 2020 and 2021, CPCs shall apply specific temporal closures at the fleet level (even if not simultaneous for purse seiners and pelagic trawlers) in view of protecting stocks during spawning periods. Such closures shall cover the entire distribution of small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea and affect all fleets targeting small pelagics, for periods of no less than 30 continuous days per fleet segment. Vessels belonging to fleets subject to closure shall be prohibited to change gear for targeting small pelagics (purse seine to/from pelagic trawl) during the closure period. Such closures shall take place during the following timeframes:

- for sardine, from 1 October to 31 March
- for anchovy, from 1 April to 30 September

10. By way of derogation from paragraph 9, such temporal closures may be implemented for periods of no less than 15 continuous days for national fleets of less than 15 purse seiners and/or pelagic trawlers actively fishing for small pelagic stocks.

11. CPCs shall apply spatial closures to vessels over 12 m length overall for no less than 7 months in 2019, 8 months in 2020 and 9 months in 2021. Such closures shall cover 30 percent of the territorial or inner waters identified as important for the protection of early age classes of fish.

12. In order to protect small pelagics, in 2019, 2020 and 2021 fishing activity with purse seiners and pelagic trawlers targeting anchovy or sardine shall be prohibited in the area outlined in the map in Annex 1.

13. CPCs shall notify to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 31 December 2018, the set of closure dates and areas of application listed under paragraphs 9, 10 and 11.

Fleet capacity and fleet register

14. CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 30 November 2018, the list of all pelagic trawlers (single or pair trawlers) and purse seiners actively fishing for small pelagic stocks in 2014.

15. CPCs shall ensure that the overall fleet capacity of trawlers and purse seiners actively fishing for small pelagic stocks, in terms of gross tonnage (GT) and/or gross registered tonnage (GRT), engine power (kW) and number of vessels, as recorded both in national and GFCM registers, does not exceed the fleet capacity for small pelagics in 2014.

16. The provision under paragraph 15 shall not apply to the national fleets of less than ten purse seiners and/or pelagic trawlers actively fishing for small pelagic stocks. In such case, the capacity of active fleets may increase by not more than 50 percent in number of vessels and in terms of GT and/or GRT and kW.

PART III **Scientific monitoring**

17. The SAC shall suggest alternative solutions to ensure the availability of the results of hydroacoustic surveys of the previous year not later than 31 January of a given year including the implementation of additional winter surveys.

18. The SAC shall evaluate each year the effectiveness of the emergency measures established by this recommendation towards achieving the objectives set out in paragraph 1.

19. The SAC, at its twenty-second session in 2020, shall give mandate to the Workshop on the assessment of management measures (WKMSE) to carry out a management strategy evaluation (MSE) in order to test alternative management approaches to be implemented starting from 2022, in accordance with the terms of reference in Annex 2.

20. On the basis of the outcomes of the work mentioned at paragraph 19 and of SAC advice, the GFCM shall, in 2021, revise Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1 and, in 2022 at the latest, implement a management plan.

PART IV

Monitoring, control and surveillance programme

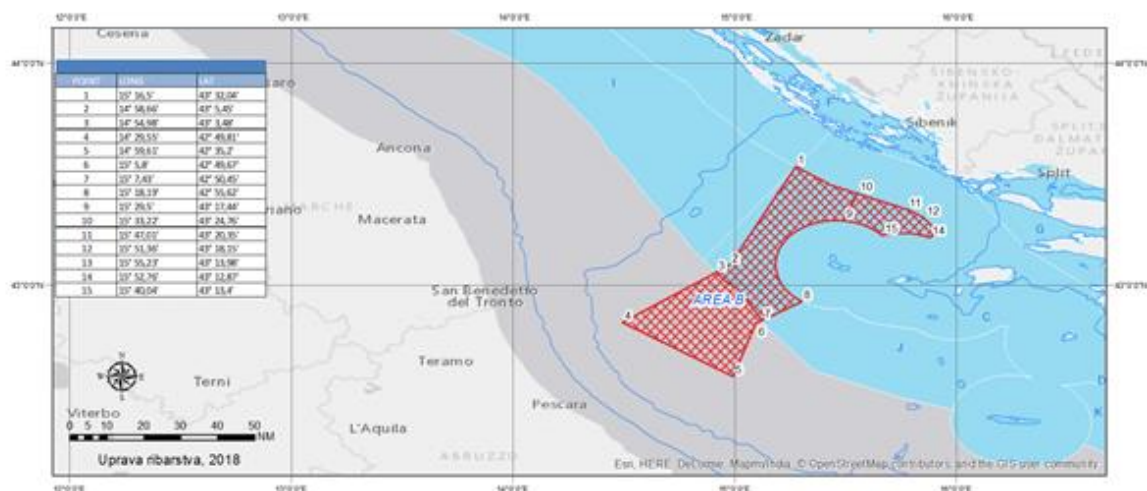
21. In order to facilitate the monitoring of catches, all catches shall be landed, with the exception of those catches which may be discarded in accordance with existing national legislation.

22. Upon request of CPCs, with the assistance of the GFCM Secretariat, a pilot project shall be established in 2019 with a view to establishing a voluntary observation and inspection programme, in order to ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures of this recommendation.

23. Such voluntary observation and inspection programme, to be implemented in 2019, 2020 and 2021, shall comprise, *inter alia*, the following elements:

- a) Inspections at sea;
- b) Procedures for an effective investigation of alleged violations of the conservation and management measures contained 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 for 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.

Annex 1



Pomo/Jabuka Pit		
Point	Latitude	Longitude
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
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
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
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

Terms of reference for the Working Group on Management Strategies for Small Pelagics in the Adriatic Sea

The working group shall test, starting from 2022, alternative management approaches (harvest control rule [HCR]) for anchovy and sardine in the Adriatic Sea using different effort and/or catch-based management strategies and reference points operating on the basis of fixed values of fishing mortality and biomass.

Management decisions

- a) Test fixed F_{msy} HCR coupled with effort and catch-based management that will ensure a low probability of SSB to fall below B_{lim} (5 percent probability), including the scenarios agreed at the WKMSE 2017.
- b) Test a biomass escapement HCR that will ensure a low probability of SSB to fall below B_{lim} (5 percent probability), coupled with effort and catch-based management. For this HCR, define:
 - an optimal level of the biomass escapement ($B_{escapement}$)
 - the need of a fishing mortality cap (F_{cap})
- c) The WKMSE may propose and test other appropriate management scenarios for small pelagics fisheries in the Adriatic based on the ecosystem approach.

Economic performance

Evaluate the impact of the different HCR on the socio-economic aspects of the concerned fleets and related industries (processing and tuna farming).

Performance statistics

Evaluate the performance of alternate scenarios on a 5–10–20 year time scale using standard MSE diagnostic tools, focusing in particular on the following in relation to harvest rate:

- Probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} .
- Risk versus catch level
- Catch variability
- Average catch
- Level of SSB
- Probability of fisheries closure

Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/9 on a regional research programme for rapa whelk 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 the 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 at levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY);

RECALLING that the 2016 Bucharest Declaration towards enhanced cooperation on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture, in particular the technical outputs of the expert meetings (Panel 1) in its Annex, recommends cooperation with the GFCM towards the promotion of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, which includes the collection of information on fisheries-related issues, such as relevant socio-economic data, discards, incidental catches of vulnerable species, invasive species and other aspects of marine ecosystems;

RECALLING that the 2018 Sofia Ministerial Declaration 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 data collection, scientific evaluation and implementation of an ecosystem-based fisheries management framework in the Black Sea;

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 measures formulated by the GFCM shall be based on the best scientific advice available and on the work of the BlackSea4Fish project in supporting the advice delivered by the

Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS), taking into account relevant environmental, economic and social factors;

NOTING that the conclusions of the fifth meeting of the Subregional Group on Stock Assessment in the Black Sea (Georgia, December 2017) suggest that rapa whelk fisheries are already reaching MSY levels and that care should be taken in further expanding this fishery;

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

CONSIDERING the socio-economic importance of rapa whelk fisheries in the Black Sea and the need to ensure their long-term economic sustainability;

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

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

PART I

Objectives, scope and definitions

Objectives of the research programme

1. This recommendation shall establish a regional research programme towards the sustainable exploitation of rapa whelk in the Black Sea (geographical subarea [GSA] 29) (hereafter “regional research programme”).
2. This recommendation shall apply to all commercial fishing activities exploiting rapa whelk in the Black Sea (GSA 29).
3. The regional research programme established by this recommendation shall support the WGBS and be scientifically assessed and coordinated within the BlackSea4Fish project.
4. Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) whose vessels are actively fishing in GSA 29 agree to implement the regional research programme in accordance with the objectives of this recommendation.

Geographical scope

5. The regional research programme and the transitional measures established by this recommendation shall apply to GSA 29.

Definitions

6. For the purpose of this recommendation:
 - 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) “Rapa whelk” means gastropods pertaining to the species *Rapana venosa*;
 - c) “Vessel actively fishing for rapa whelk” means any vessel equipped with fishing gear to fish

for rapa whelk or used for scuba diving to fish for rapa whelk, and holding a valid fishing authorization for rapa whelk.

PART II

Operational and specific objectives

7. The operational objective of this recommendation shall be to improve scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge of the fisheries exploiting rapa whelk by establishing a regional research programme on rapa whelk.

8. The specific objective of this recommendation shall be to collect data on fishing activities in order to improve research and scientific knowledge for the sustainable exploitation of the stock, aiming at maintaining the stock at MSY levels as well as the socio-economic viability of rapa whelk fisheries.

9. The WGBS, at its annual meeting in 2021, shall assess the outcome of the regional research programme established by this recommendation, taking into consideration the national efforts made by CPCs to manage rapa whelk fisheries. The WGBS shall report to the GFCM, at its forty-fifth session in 2021, and, if deemed necessary, present proposals for the adaptation of the measures set by this recommendation and for complementary management and control measures.

PART III

Regional research programme and scientific monitoring

10. CPCs with fishing fleets targeting rapa whelk shall ensure that a mechanism for adequate scientific monitoring of rapa whelk catches in the Black Sea is duly in place, with a view to facilitating the implementation of the regional research programme and to allowing the WGBS to provide descriptive information and advice on at least the following:

- a) deployed fishing effort (e.g. number of fishing days/week) and overall catch levels at the national or supranational levels, indicating the fishing gear used;
- b) data on overall bycatch quantities by fishing gear and species, excluding scuba diving;
- c) biological and socio-economic effects of alternative management scenarios, including input/output and/or technical measures, such as fishing gear/environmental impacts, as proposed by the CPCs; and
- d) possible spatio-temporal closures in order to preserve fisheries sustainability.

11. The BlackSea4Fish project shall facilitate and coordinate the assessment of relevant data at the regional level under the regional research programme.

12. The GFCM Secretariat, with the support of the WGBS, shall provide terms of reference, including costs, services and other requirements to support the implementation of a research programme on rapa whelk in the Black Sea, as described in Annex 1 of this recommendation. The regional research programme shall be launched in 2019.

PART IV

Final provisions

13. In light of the results of the regional research programme referred to in Part III of this recommendation, the GFCM may propose and adopt new appropriate management and control measures, including monitoring of fishing activities and catches.

Key elements of the regional research programme on rapa whelk in the Black Sea**Introduction**

There is high need for scientific and research projects in the Black Sea aimed to fill gaps of knowledge on rapa whelk, a high commercial value species in the Black Sea. There has been an increase in the coverage and in the quality of data on the abundance of rapa whelk, with some data on length and age composition. Based on such data, the first rapa whelk scientific assessment was carried out in 2017 by the Subregional Group on Stock Assessment in the Black Sea. However, the overall lack of fisheries-independent surveys in the Black Sea covering the regional distribution of the main commercial species in a comprehensive manner persists.

Main features of the regional research programme on rapa whelk in the Black Sea

- Clear objectives defined in advance (e.g. biomass in tonnes, abundance in number of km², spatio-temporal distribution patterns);
- Priority given to the collection of useful data for the provision of scientific advice in support of management (length, age, life cycle);
- Combination of fishery-dependent and fishery-independent sources of information to ensure a regular monitoring;
- All Black Sea CPCs should be involved;
- The regional research programme should also provide guidelines and facilitate harmonization, standardization of protocols, coordination and comparison of the results obtained by past, ongoing and future national, regional and international research programmes addressing rapa whelk, such as the BlackSea4Fish project.

Work packages

Work packages are designed to address the main aspects mentioned above as well as the need to evaluate the social and economic aspects of the rapa whelk fisheries in the context of the sustainable management and exploitation of the stock.

Work Package 1 – Biology and ecology

Work Package 2 – Fishery-independent data collection – Surveys-at-sea

Work Package 3 – Fishery-dependent data collection

Work Package 4 – Stock assessment

Work Package 5 – Socio-economic elements

Work Package 6 – Management proposals

Main objectives of each work package

WP 1 – Biology and ecology of rapa whelk, including demography. Biology: studies on size, density, abundance, biomass, recruitment, growth, reproduction, physiology, environmental parameters, habitat, feeding and bycatch surveys). Ecology: genetics, interactions with other species, impacts of fishing gear on the marine environment).

WP 2 – Fishery-independent data collection through multiannual demersal beam trawl/dredge surveys-at-sea, e.g. biomass and abundance indices, size/age distribution, bycatch.

WP 3 – Fishery-dependent data collection through port sampling (e.g. landings, length/distribution, fishing techniques used and vessels engaged in the fishing activity, value) and through observers on board (e.g. bycatch, days at sea).

WP 4 – Stock assessment: investigation on methodologies for assessing the status of rapa whelk, including by compiling historical data.

WP 5 – Socio-economic elements: socio-economic survey on the sector, trade, markets and development of economic indicators, external aspects affecting the fishery, economic sustainability of related fishing gear.

WP 6 – Management proposals: identification of possible additional measures through management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the sustainability of rapa whelk fisheries.

Implementation of the regional research programme

The GFCM shall:

- Assess progress in the different work packages,
- Define standardized methods (e.g. in ageing) as well as research protocols, and
- Organize capacity-building activities.

Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/10 on access to information and data related to monitoring, control and surveillance within the framework of joint inspection and surveillance schemes

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 Resolution GFCM/35/2011/2 on data confidentiality policy and procedures, amending Resolution GFCM/30/2006/1;

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 that this plan stipulates that contracting parties, non-contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) shall cooperate with each other and with the GFCM Secretariat to identify and discourage nationals who are operators and/or beneficial owners of vessels involved in illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing;

RECALLING 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;

CONCERNED by the continuation of IUU fishing activities in the GFCM area of application and that these activities diminish the effectiveness of GFCM conservation and management measures;

RECOGNIZING that the identification of a vessel greatly facilitates monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) activities in combating IUU fishing activities, and that there is a need to develop and implement such measures in a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory manner;

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

PART I
General objective and scope

1. The purpose of the present recommendation is to enhance access and exchange of information as essential components of an effective MCS system and, consequently, of sound fisheries management.
2. This recommendation shall apply to all CPCs engaged in pilot projects or international schemes for joint inspection and surveillance in the GFCM area of application.

PART II
Access to data and information

3. Upon request by CPCs engaged in inspection and control activities in the GFCM area of application and with the agreement of the relevant CPC's flag state, the GFCM Secretariat shall make available all the information it maintains pursuant to GFCM conservation and management measures, including but

not limited to updated lists of authorized vessels and of designated landing ports.

4. CPCs and the GFCM Secretariat shall ensure the secure treatment of the information referred to in paragraph 3 and of related data, reports and messages, in particular when the processing involves electronic data transmission.

5. The GFCM Secretariat shall implement appropriate technical and organizational measures to protect data, reports and messages against accidental or unlawful destruction, accidental loss, alteration, unauthorized disclosure or access, and all inappropriate forms of processing.

6. This recommendation shall not prejudice the level of protection of individuals having regard to the processing of personal data under the provisions of national law.

PART III

Entry into force

7. CPCs shall transpose this recommendation 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 recommendation into their national legislation.

Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/11 on the regional marking of fishing gear

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;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance, adopted by the Committee on Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) at its thirty-first session (FAO headquarters, June 2014);

RECALLING the United Nations Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the 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 (Fish Stocks Agreement) of 4 August 1995, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (Compliance Agreement);

RECALLING 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;

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;

CONCERNED by the continuation of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities in the GFCM area of application, and that these activities diminish the effectiveness of GFCM conservation and management measures;

NOTING that the requirements for action on the marking of fishing gear are global in scope and also apply to subregional, regional and global organizations concerned with the conservation of fishery resources and with the management and development of fisheries;

RECOGNIZING that the identification of a fishing gear greatly facilitates monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) activities in combating IUU fishing activities, and that there is a need to develop and implement such measures in a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory manner;

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

PART I Marking of fishing gear

1. Each flag CPC shall ensure that passive fishing gear, such as set nets, pots, lines and longlines, used by fishing vessels larger than 15 metres in length overall and authorized to fish for species managed by the GFCM in its area of application, is marked in such a way that it can be readily identified, in accordance with national law and with generally accepted standards such as the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear.

2. The Working Group on Fishing Technology (WGFiT) is invited to include among its activities the possibility to facilitate the exchange of experience among countries in relation to the marking of fishing

gear.

3. Each flag CPC shall increase awareness amongst its fishing vessels and fishers about the importance of marking fishing gear for fighting against IUU fishing, abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear.

PART II

Special requirements of CPC developing states

4. CPCs are aware that the full application of this recommendation requires technical competence by all CPCs and the GFCM Secretariat. To this end, the capacity of CPC developing states to implement this recommendation shall be taken into account in accordance with Article 17 of the GFCM Agreement, in particular by way of technical assistance.

PART III

Final provisions

5. The application of this recommendation shall not prejudice the adoption by CPCs of any other provision or regulation that could imply stricter requirements and obligations in relation to the marking of fishing gear.

6. This recommendation shall enter into force at the latest on 1 January 2022.

Pending proposal on the establishment of a minimum conservation reference size for blackspot seabream in the Mediterranean

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 XX¹ 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.

¹ To be defined in line with the scientific advice of the SAC in 2019.

Protocols for the protection of VMEs in the GFCM area of application

A –VME encounter reporting protocol in the GFCM area of application

1. Introduction

Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly on sustainable fisheries of 2004², 2006³ and 2009⁴ call upon regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) to take urgent action to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) from significant adverse impact in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

2. Objective

Further implement the precautionary approach for managing deep-sea fisheries (DSF) with respect to VMEs, due to the difficulty in acquiring data on VMEs location and extent and with a view to avoiding the risk of significant adverse impacts (SAIs) by fisheries, GFCM should adopt a VME Encounter Protocol for the DSF operating in its area of application.

GFCM Contracting Party or Cooperating non-Contracting Party (CPCs) should consider, as necessary, applying additional management measures to their flagged vessels undertaking DSF to avoid overexploitation of resources and to avoid SAIs on VMEs.

3. Definitions

The list of VME Indicator Features, Habitats and Taxa for the Mediterranean Sea is given in Annex 1.

4. Scope

- *Geographical coverage*: Mediterranean Sea (GSAs 01 to 28)
- *Fisheries*

The following fisheries shall be considered:

- i. all fishing vessels above 15 m (LOA) operating with bottom contact fishing gear fishing for *Aristaeomorpha foliacea*, *Aristeus antennatus*, or *Plesionika martia*
- ii. all fishing vessels above 15 m (LOA) operating with bottom contact gears (bottom trawls, longlines, gillnets and pots and traps) at depths deeper than 300 m and all offshore seamounts;

For the purposes of these technical elements, the fisheries described above shall be referred to as “deep-sea fisheries” (DSFs).

5. Encounter protocol

- *Encounter*: an encounter with VME Indicator Taxa is defined as any catch of VME Indicator Taxa obtained by any DSF.

Encounter rule: following an encounter with VME Indicator Taxa during DSF, the vessel captain shall immediately report the encounter to the flag State, on the form provided in Annex 2, including the following information:

- i. the position of the vessel, either by the start and end point of the tow or set, or by another position that is closest to the exact encounter location;
- ii. the fishing characteristics of the vessel;

² A/RES/59/25

³ A/RES/61/105

⁴ A/RES/64/72

- iii. the groups of the VME Indicator Taxa encountered and the best estimates of their live weight (kg).

6. Reporting to GFCM Secretariat

Upon notification by the vessel captain, as described above, relevant CPCs shall forward, within 30 days, the encounter information reported by the vessel captain, to the GFCM Secretariat, including by electronic means.

7. Review of the information gathered by mean of the VME Encounter Protocol

The GFCM Secretariat shall compile the data received with the encounter protocols and set up maps of the distribution of encounters with VME Indicator Taxa, including their abundance by group. The GFCM Secretariat shall regularly inform the SAC about the reported catches of VME Indicator Taxa in Mediterranean fisheries. The SAC shall review this information and, based upon the best scientific evidence available, evaluate the occurrence of VMEs and propose to the Commission, as appropriate, the establishment of new management measures, including FRAs, to ensure the protection of these ecosystems.

8. Observers

The use of scientific observers to assist the crew in data collection is encouraged in order to allow the identification of the VME Indicator Taxa to the lowest taxonomic level and to obtain information on bycatch composition.

9. CPCs responsibilities

CPCs should consider adopting temporary closures and apply these to their flagged vessels if they consider that the encounter has identified a VME. Any measure adopted in this sense should be reported to the GFCM Secretariat for further notification to the SAC.

Mediterranean VME indicator features, habitats and taxa

(a) Mediterranean VME indicator features

The following features potentially support VMEs:

Seamounts and volcanic ridges
 Canyons and trenches
 Steep slopes
 Submarine reliefs (*slumped blocks, ridges, cobble fields, etc.*)
 Cold seeps (*pockmarks, mud volcanoes, reducing sediment, anoxic pools, methanogenetic hard bottoms*)
 Hydrothermal vents

(b) Mediterranean VME indicator habitats

The following habitats potentially support VMEs:

Cold-water coral reefs
 Coral gardens
 - Hard-bottom coral garden
 - Soft-bottom coral gardens
 Sea pen fields
 Deep-sea sponge aggregations
 - “Ostur” sponge aggregations
 - Hard-bottom sponge gardens
 - Glass sponge communities
 - Soft-bottom sponge gardens
 Tube-dwelling anemone patches
 Crinoid fields
 Oyster reefs and other giant bivalves
 Seep and vent communities
 Other dense emergent fauna

(c) Mediterranean VME indicator taxa

Phylum	Class	Subclass (Order)
Cnidaria	Anthozoa	Hexacorallia (Antipatharia, Scleractinia)
		Octocorallia (Alcyonacea, Pennatulacea)
		Ceriantharia
	Hydrozoa	Hydroidolina
Porifera (sponges)	Demospongiae	
	Hexactinellida	Amphidiscophora Hexasterophora
Bryozoa	Gymnolaemata	
	Stenolaemata	
Echinodermata	Crinoidea	Articulata
Mollusca	Bivalvia	Gryphaeidae (<i>Neopycnodonte cochlear</i> , <i>N. zibrowii</i>)
		Heterodonta* (Lucinoida) (e.g. <i>Lucinoma kazani</i>)
		Pteriomorpha* (Mytiloida) (e.g. <i>Idas modiolaeformis</i>)
Annelida*	Polychaeta	Sedentaria (Canalipalpata) (e.g. <i>Lamellibrachia anaximandri</i> , <i>Siboglinum</i> spp.)
Arthropoda*	Malacostraca	Eumalacostraca (Amphipoda) (e.g. <i>Haploops</i> spp.)

*only chemosynthetic species that indicate the presence of a cold seep or hydrothermal vent are considered

VME encounter reporting in the GFCM area of application

Separate forms to be completed for each deployment of the fishing gear (haul/set) in which VME Indicator Taxa are caught.

A. Fishing Trip Information	
Country:	
Vessel name:	
Captain (name and last name):	
Date of encounter (dd/mm/yyyy):	
B. Fleet and gear information⁵	
Fleet segment:	
Fishing gear:	
C. VME Encounter coordinates	
GSA:	Statistical grid:
Point 1 (Start)	Point 2 (End)
Latitude:	Longitude:
Latitude:	Longitude:
Fishing depth (average or range, m):	
VME Feature and/or Habitat (Annex 1 a and b)	
D. VME Indicator Taxa catch information (Annex 1 c)	
Total live weight of corals in the haul/set (kg):	
Total live weight of sponges in the haul/set (kg):	
Total live weight of other vulnerable benthic taxa in the haul/set (kg):	
E. VME Indicator Taxa (by trained observers on board)	
<i>Identify VME Taxa to lowest taxonomic level (species if possible) and provide comments.</i>	
F. Pictures of VME Indicator Taxa (by fishers and/or observers on board)	
<i>Take pictures of the different VME Indicator Taxa and submit them as an attachment to the current form.</i>	

⁵ Refer to: GFCM, 2016. GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) (<http://www.fao.org/gfcm/data/dcrf/en/>)

B - Mapping existing deep-sea fishing areas in the GFCM area of application

1. Introduction

Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly on sustainable fisheries of 2004⁶, 2006⁷ and 2009⁸ call upon regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) to take urgent action to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) from significant adverse impact in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

2. Objectives

The deep-sea bottom fisheries of the Mediterranean target only a few species that are fished on specific habitats. In order to manage these fisheries sustainably, and prohibit any significant adverse impacts they may cause on non-target species and VMEs, it is necessary to map the distribution of the existing deep-sea bottom fishing areas.

3. Definitions

“Existing deep-sea bottom fishing areas”, means that portion of the GFCM area of application where deep-sea bottom fishing has occurred according to the map adopted under Section B Paragraph 5..

“Exploratory (or new) deep-sea bottom fishing” occurs during the initial development phase of a DSF when the DSF operates in areas that have not been previously fished or in fished areas following significant changes in the gear or effort, as described in paragraphs 23, 55, 61 and 65 of the *FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep Sea Fisheries in the High Seas*.

4. Scope

- *Geographical coverage*: Mediterranean Sea (GSAs 01 to 28)
- *Fisheries*

The following fisheries shall be considered:

- i. bottom trawlers above 15 m (LOA) fishing for *Aristaeomorpha foliacea*, *Aristeus antennatus*, or *Plesionika martia*;
- ii. all fishing vessels above 15 m (LOA) operating with bottom contact gears (bottom trawls, longlines, gillnets and pots and traps) at depths deeper than 300 m and all offshore seamounts;

For the purposes of these technical elements, the fisheries described above shall be referred to as “deep-sea fisheries” (DSFs).

5. Management measure

GFCM Contracting Party or Cooperating non-Contracting Party (CPCs) with vessels involved in “deep-sea bottom fisheries” shall submit to the extent possible and no later than 31 December 20[20] comprehensive maps of existing deep-sea bottom fishing areas [during the five-year period of 2012-2016] to the GFCM Secretariat. Maps shall be based on VMS/AIS data and/or other available geo-reference data and be expressed in as precise spatial and temporal resolution as possible. The submission of the detailed gear deployment position information will facilitate the mapping process. Priorities should be given to bottom trawling below 300 m, but it is highly desirable to map other types of fishing gears that contact the seafloor during normal use, e.g. bottom set longlines, gillnets, trammel nets, and pots. Contracting Parties may, in the future, consider the possibility of refining these maps on the basis of haul-by-haul information, if available. GFCM Secretariat shall compile a composite map, preferably by gear type, of the existing deep-sea bottom fishing areas within the GFCM area of application. The SAC shall review this information and based upon the scientific evidence available, adopt the map defining the existing bottom fishing areas in the GFCM area of application. The map shall be revised regularly to incorporate any new relevant information.

⁶ A/RES/59/25

⁷ A/RES/61/105

⁸ A/RES/64/72

C - Exploratory deep-sea bottom fishing reporting protocol in the GFCM area of application

1. Introduction

Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly on sustainable fisheries of 2004⁹, 2006¹⁰ and 2009¹¹ call upon regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) to take urgent action to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) from significant adverse impact in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

2. Objectives

To ensure that exploratory or new deep-sea fishing activities are only allowed to expand at a rate consistent with the knowledge and management of that fishery. This will avoid overexploitation of targeted deep-sea fish stocks. Further, great care needs to be taken to ensure that VMEs are mapped and known, and suitable mitigation measures applied to ensure their protection from significant adverse impacts resulting from any new fishery.

3. Definitions

“Existing deep-sea bottom fishing areas”, means that portion of the GFCM area of application where deep-sea bottom fishing has occurred according to the map adopted under Section B Paragraph 5.

“Exploratory (or new) deep-sea bottom fishing” occurs during the initial development phase of a DSF when the DSF operates in areas that have not been previously fished or in fished areas following significant changes in the gear or effort, as described in paragraphs 23, 55, 61 and 65 of the *FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep Sea Fisheries in the High Seas*.

4. Scope

- *Geographical coverage*: Mediterranean Sea (GSAs 01 to 28)
- *Fisheries*: All fishing vessels above 15 m (LOA) operating with bottom contact gears (bottom trawls, longlines, gillnets and pots and traps) are considered undertaking Exploratory (or new) deep-sea bottom fishing when operating:
 - i. On VME Indicator Features (see Annex 1 a)
 - ii. Outside of the existing bottom deep-sea fishing areas
 - iii. Inside of existing bottom fishing areas with bottom-contact fishing gears not previously used or when significant increases of effort are planned or when a new fishery is developing

5. Management measure

GFCM Contracting Party or Cooperating non-Contracting Party (CPCs) of flagged fishing vessels undertaking exploratory (or new) deep-sea bottom fishing shall be required to complete the Exploratory deep-sea bottom fishing protocol provided in Annex 1, including the following information:

- i. the start and end point of each tow or set;
- ii. the fishing characteristics of the vessel including the gear used;
- iii. the GSA area and the Statistical Grid where the exploratory deep-sea fishing occurred;
- iv. the catch, the bycatch, the discards, and fishing effort;
- v. VME Indicator Taxa (if any) through the VME Encounter Protocol.

6. Reporting to GFCM Secretariat

Upon notification by the vessel captain, as described above, relevant CPCs shall forward, within 30

⁹A/RES/59/25

¹⁰A/RES/61/105

¹¹A/RES/64/72

days, the exploratory deep-sea bottom protocol form reported by the vessel captain, to the GFCM Secretariat, including by electronic means.

7. Review of the information gathered through the exploratory deep-sea bottom protocol

The GFCM Secretariat shall compile the data received with the exploratory deep-sea bottom protocol and shall regularly inform the SAC. The SAC shall review this information.

8. Observers

The use of scientific observers to assist in data collection and reporting is highly desirable according to the GFCM DCRF¹².

¹²Refer to: GFCM, 2018. GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) (<http://www.fao.org/gfcm/data/dcrf/en/>).

Exploratory deep-sea fishing reporting in the GFCM area of application (Mediterranean Sea)

Separate forms must be completed for each new exploratory deep-sea fishing trip

A. Fishing Trip Information	
Country:	
Vessel name:	
Captain (name and last name):	
Dates of exploratory fishing trip (dd/mm/yyyy format):	
B. Fleet and gear information¹³	
Fleet segment:	
Fishing gear:	
Area information	
GSA:	Statistical grid¹⁴:
Area fished (coordinates-attach map):	
VME Indicator Feature (if any):	
Depth range fished (m):	
Fishing effort:	
C. Catch summary	
<i>List main commercial species and quantities caught during the exploratory deep-sea bottom fishing</i>	
D. Bycatch summary	
<i>Provide details of bycatch species</i>	
D. VME Indicator Taxa	
<i>Use the provided VME Encounter Protocol for any catch of VME Indicator Taxa</i>	
E. Comments (by fishing crew)	

¹³ Refer to: GFCM, 2018. GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) (<http://www.fao.org/gfcm/data/dcrf/en>)

¹⁴ Refer to: Appendix M - Geographic statistical grid for red coral, DCRF. GFCM, 2018. GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF)

Updated table of priority species (new species in bold)

	Western Mediterranean	Central Mediterranean	Adriatic Sea	Eastern Mediterranean	Black Sea
Pelagic species	<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>
	<i>Sardina pilchardus</i>	<i>Sardina pilchardus</i>	<i>Sardina pilchardus</i>	<i>Sardinella aurita</i>	<i>Trachurus mediterraneus</i>
				<i>Sardina pilchardus</i>	<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>
Demersal species	<i>Parapenaeus longirostris</i>	<i>Parapenaeus longirostris</i>	<i>Mullus barbatus</i>	<i>Mullus barbatus</i>	<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>
	<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	<i>Saurida lessepsianus</i>	<i>Scophthalmus maximus</i>
	<i>Pagellus bogaraveo</i>	<i>Aristeus antennatus</i>	<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>
		<i>Aristaeomorpha foliacea</i>	<i>Parapenaeus longirostris</i> (GSA 18)	<i>Aristeus antennatus</i>	<i>Rapana venosa</i>
		<i>Mullus barbatus</i>	<i>Solea solea</i> (GSA 17)	<i>Aristaeomorpha foliacea</i>	
			<i>Sepia officinalis</i>		
			<i>Squilla mantis</i>		
Species of regional importance		<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>			
Species of conservation concern	<i>Anguilla Anguilla</i>				
	<i>Corallium rubrum</i>				<i>Squalus acanthias</i>
Non-indigenous species	<i>Pterois miles</i>				
	<i>Lagocephalus sceleratus</i>				

Terms of reference for select activities

Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Marine Protected Areas (WGMPA)

1. Review the state of FRAs in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, including an assessment of the state of the ecosystem and human dimension and assess the benefits of FRAs for protection and recovery of endangered /overexploited stocks in the GFCM area
2. Identify potential new FRAs, including both ecosystem and socioeconomic analysis and identification of needs for a formal protection proposal.
3. Review of the state of implementation of Resolution GFCM/41/2017/5 on a network of EFH, including advances on the implementation of the roadmap proposed by the SAC
4. Advise the sac on any EFH/VME related matters and coordinate the elaboration of management tools (including future protocols)

Terms of Reference of consultant(s) on selectivity and fishing technology within the remit of the WGFiT

In liaison with the chairperson of WGFiT, as well as with the network of experts associated with the WG, the consultant(s) shall:

1. Assess and evaluate the information already available on fishing technology by country, including the results of previous projects
2. Analyse GFCM decisions related to selectivity and fishing technology
3. Develop a medium-term (3-4 years) program of work towards defining a clear research program to address GFCM priorities in relation to fishing technology and selectivity
4. Develop and advance on a pilot project on the study of selectivity in the central Mediterranean (Gulf of Gabès), following the ToRs provided by the 42nd Session of the GFCM

Terms of reference for a pilot project on selective trawl fisheries in the Gulf of Gabès

- A. The 41st session of the GFCM Commission agreed on setting up a permanent Working Group on Fisheries Technology (WGFiT). The 42nd session of the GFCM Commission noted that fisheries selectivity may be improved through making fishing gears more selective, in particular trawls.
- B. In addition to the long term objectives and Terms of Reference agreed for WGFiT, the 42nd session of the GFCM Commission agreed on setting up a pilot project aiming at proposing concrete recommendations to increase the selectivity of trawl fisheries targeting hake and deep-sea rose shrimp in the Gulf of Gabès.
- C. It is noted that information and operational results are already available to help provide such advice:
 - technical trials and studies on gear selectivity
 - studies on the socio-economic effects of implementing such selective gears
- D. The European Union agreed to provide the results of the studies conducted in the framework of Minouw, DiscardLess and other studies conducted in the framework of the EU structural and

research funds for fisheries. The other CPCs concerned also agreed to provide the results of relevant studies.

- E. The 42nd session of the GFCM Commission concurred on the necessity to involve all the CPCs concerned by trawling activities taking place in the Gulf of Gabès and more generally, to involve all the CPCs willing to cooperate on this pilot project. The 42nd session also agreed that it would be desirable to duplicate this pilot project in other areas of the Mediterranean, in due time and as appropriate.

The pilot project shall unfold as follows:

1. A qualified fisheries technology expert with relevant experience in Mediterranean fisheries shall be recruited as soon as possible in 2019 to conduct the pilot project.
2. The first task of the expert shall be to compile the information and the operational results referred to in point C and D.
3. With the assistance of the GFCM Secretariat, the expert shall prepare a report focussing on concrete recommendations to improve the selectivity of the trawl fisheries operating in the Gulf of Gabès, taking into account the specificities and the socio-economic structure of such fleets.
4. The expert shall present its report and recommendations to the 2019 annual session of the SAC.
5. Upon assessment of the report, the SAC may issue recommendations to the 43rd session of the Commission.

APPENDIX 20 (1)

GFCM autonomous budget for 2019

		USD	Share of total %
STAFF	Professional staff (10)	1 371 000	54.04%
	Administrative staff (7)	454 000	17.89%
	TOTAL STAFF	1 825 000	71.93%
FUNCTIONING	Temporary human resources (Security Guards, admin. support, overtime)	40 000	1.58 %
	Consultants (including translators of scientific publications)	40 000	1.58 %
	Travel (Staff, Bureau, Coordinators, Interpreters, Experts' DSA and tickets)	95 000	3.74 %
	Training	8 000	0.32 %
	Expendable procurement (including printing of publications)	12 000	0.47 %
	Non-expendable procurement	6 000	0.24 %
	General operating expenses	15 000	0.59 %
	Internal/External services backcharge	165 000	6.50 %
	TOTAL FUNCTIONING	441 000	2.36 %
SUBTOTAL 1 (staff + functioning)		2 266 000	
ANCILLARY	Hospitality and Miscellaneous (1 %)	22 660	
	Participation Fund (2.5 %)	57 217	
	SUBTOTAL 2	2 345 877	
	FAO Support Costs (4.5% of subtotal 2)	105 564	
	SUBTOTAL 3	2 451 441	
	GFCM Working Capital Fund (3.5% of subtotal 3)	85 800	
AUTONOMOUS BUDGET (US Dollars)		2 537 241	

**Contributions to the GFCM budget for 2019
(based on 2014-2016 averages)**

Member	USD	%	USD	Index	USD	Weighted Total	USD
Albania	25 813	1.02	11 031	1	6 343	25 598	8 439
Algeria	79 944	3.15	11 031	1	6 343	189 800	62 569
Bulgaria	17 375	0.68	11 031	1	6 343		
Croatia	74 463	2.93	11 031	10	63 431		
Cyprus	74 463	2.93	11 031	10	63 431		
Egypt	78 811	3.11	11 031	1	6 343	186 365	61 437
France	137 893	5.43	11 031	20	126 862		
Greece	74 463	2.93	11 031	10	63 431		
Israel							
Italy	137 893	5.43	11 031	20	126 862		
Japan	137 893	5.43	11 031	20	126 862		
Lebanon	20 902	0.82	11 031	1	6 343	10 700	3 527
Libya	45 665	1.80	11 031	1	6 343	85 817	28 290
Malta	74 463	2.93	11 031	10	63 431		
Monaco	11 031	0.43	11 031				
Montenegro	12 343	0.49	11 031			3 980	1 312
Morocco	37 466	1.48	11 031	1	6 343	60 946	20 091
Romania	17 375	0.68	11 031	1	6 343		
Slovenia	74 463	2.93	11 031	10	63 431		
Spain	74 463	2.93	11 031	10	63 431		
Syria	19 284	0.76	11 031	1	6 343	5 793	1 910
Tunisia	139 188	5.49	11 031	1	6 343	369 514	121 813
Turkey	402 477	15.86	11 031	10	63 431	995 014	328 015
EC	769 110	30.31	11 031			2 299 589	758 079
		100		140		4 233 117	
	2 537 241		253 724		888 034		1 395 483

Total budget	2 537 241	USD
Basic fee	10%	of total budget
	253 724	USD
Number of Members*	23	
Total budget less basic fee	2 283 517	USD
GDP component	35%	of total budget
	888 034	USD
Catch component	55%	of total budget
	1 395 483	USD

* Members paying their contributions to the autonomous budget

The forty-second session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean as well as the ninth session of the Committee on Administration and Finance was attended by delegates of 22 contracting parties, as well as of four cooperating non-contracting parties and two non-contracting parties. Representatives from 15 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, progress in activities related to fisheries, aquaculture, compliance and other strategic activities was reviewed. 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 increasing cooperation with the GFCM, the Commission granted cooperating non-contracting party status to Jordan.

In relation to the management of fisheries and aquaculture in the GFCM area of application, a total of eleven binding recommendations were adopted, dealing with the following issues: multiannual management plans for European eel, for deep-water red shrimp fisheries in the Levant and Ionian Seas and for demersal fisheries in the Strait of Sicily; conservation of sharks and rays; international joint inspection and surveillance in the Strait of Sicily; regional research programmes on blue crab in the Mediterranean and on rapa whelk fisheries in the Black Sea; further emergency measures for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea; access to information and data related to monitoring, control and surveillance and regional marking of fishing gear. Furthermore, the Commission agreed to launch its second performance review in 2019 and welcomed the establishment of five subregional technical units in Bulgaria, Croatia, Lebanon, Spain and Tunisia.

Finally, the Commission adopted its programme of work for the next intersession and approved its budget amounting to US\$2 537 241 for 2019 as well as a number of strategic actions to be funded through extrabudgetary resources. It also unanimously endorsed the new Bureaus of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries, the Working Group on the Black Sea and the Committee on Administration and Finance. Finally, on the occasion of its resumed session held in December 2018, the Commission unanimously elected its new Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons.

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