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Summary report of the recommendations from Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commissions of the region

Executive Summary

The FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia (SEC) hosts the secretariats of two regional fisheries commissions, the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) and the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish). In addition, the REU and SEC offices support the work of another regional commission - General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

This document outlines the results and recommendations from the sessions of the two regional commissions established under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution, CACFish and GFCM, held between the 29th and the 30th Sessions of the Regional Conference for Europe.

The Conference may wish to take note of the Summary report of the recommendations from Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commissions of the region (CACFish and GFCM).

I. Introduction

1. The Europe and Central Asia Region is one of the most heterogeneous regions in the world in terms of development of fisheries and aquaculture.

2. Fisheries management of the marine waters from the Atlantic to the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean is coordinated among member countries, linked to the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) of the European Union (EU) and coordinated with a number of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and advisory commissions. The northern and eastern seas, and to some extent the Mediterranean sea, are well managed through agreements with the EU and international RFMOs. There is however a need for better cooperation among countries on management of fisheries resources in the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, which are seriously overexploited and where a considerable amount of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing still prevents sustainable exploitation.

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3. Inland fisheries on the other hand do not contribute a great deal to total fish production despite being important for some countries in the region with low fish production (and consumption). The development stage of inland fisheries is normally not at the level of marine fisheries, but the situation is more uniform throughout the region.

4. Aquaculture is the fastest-growing food-production sector in the world with an annual growth of almost 7 percent. Today about half of the world's fish production comes from aquaculture, which has considerable development potential in the region, both in terms of industrial, semi-industrial and smallholder production.

5. The EU has a total yearly consumption of over 13 million tons of fisheries and aquaculture products, of which 65 percent is imported. The remainder is produced in the EU, with 10 percent coming from aquaculture and 25 percent from fisheries production. The EU therefore highly emphasizes further development of aquaculture, since production is far below the world's average. Outside EU with a few, but important exceptions, regional aquaculture is considerably lower.

6. The FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia (SEC) hosts the secretariats of two regional fisheries commissions, the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) and the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish). In addition, the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) and SEC offices support the work of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

7. Most of the activities of the SEC-based secretariats of EIFAAC and CACFish concentrate on aspects related to aquaculture and inland fisheries (including recreational fisheries).

8. FAO is working in the region, among other things, on facilitating regional cooperation in research and management of marine and freshwater stocks, harmonization of fisheries' laws and regulations, certification for exports of fisheries and aquaculture products, training and capacity-development in the fishing industry and training of inspectors and aquaculture farmers.

II. CACFish

9. The Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish) is a regional fisheries body established in 2010 under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution. It is a recognized body for the governance of fisheries and aquaculture, as well as for the development of regional scientific and technical cooperation in the Central Asian and Caucasus region. The Commission currently has one subsidiary body, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC has, among other things, the following key roles in:

- i) generating technical and scientific advice to support the development, enforcement and monitoring of management and conservation recommendations made by the Commission;
- ii) supporting effective implementation of the work programme of the Commission;
- iii) providing technical oversight, monitoring and evaluation of projects and programme of work activities; and
- iv) providing information on fisheries and aquaculture production and other data relevant to the functions of the Commission.

10. Since the 29th Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) held in 2014 in Bucharest, Romania, the TAC conducted two meetings and the CACFish conducted two sessions.

A. Third Session of the CACFish

11. The third session of CACFish was held in Baku, Azerbaijan from 2-4 June 2014. The following countries attended the session as members of the Commission: Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan,

Tajikistan and Turkey. The session was also attended by the following invited countries: Georgia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

12. The TAC, at its second meeting held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, from 21-23 April 2014, made recommendations on the following issues which were submitted to the Commission for its consideration and which were subsequently adopted for implementation in the Regional Work Programme (RWP): (i) inland fisheries stock assessment; (ii) regional strategic principles for climate change; (iii) framework for a regional strategy and associated principles for aquatic animal health management in the CACFish area; and (iv) fish breeding and brood-stock management.

13. The Commission noted that the region generally lacks reliable and time-bound data for most of the key commercial inland species, and acknowledged the need to promote systematic stock assessment as a fundamental fisheries' management instrument in the CACFish competence area.

14. The Commission further acknowledged the considerable contribution of the Turkish-funded Central Asia Regional Programme for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (FishDev) to the implementation of the RWP. In this regard the extension of FishDev for a second run was regarded as highly important for the continuation of delivery of expected RWP outcomes.

15. In addition, pilot studies for the RWP were also suggested by the Commission, particularly in response to the needs of both CACFish members and potential candidates.

B. Fourth Session of the CACFish

16. The fourth session of the CACFish was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia from 18-20 May 2015 and was attended by representatives from five member states: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey. The session was also attended by the following invited states: Georgia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Uzbekistan.

17. The Commission adopted the following thematic scientific and technical recommendations made by the Technical Advisory Committee at its third meeting held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, from 16-18 February 2015: (i) fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS); (ii) inland fish-hatchery management; and (iii) Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.

18. The Commission reviewed progress made in implementing the CACFish Five-Year Regional Work Programme (2015) and endorsed the second term Five-Year Regional Work Programme covering the period 2016-2020. The Commission adopted its autonomous budget for 2015. In addition, the Commission decided to hold its regular sessions every two years after its fifth session in 2016.

III. GFCM

19. The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), established under the provisions of Article XIV of the FAO constitution, was approved by the FAO Conference in 1949 and came into force in 1952. The GFCM amended its constitutive agreement on 20 May 2014 with a view to modernize its institutional and legal framework.

20. GFCM has 23 member countries along with the EU, and its objectives are to promote the conservation and sustainable use, at biological, social, economic and environmental levels, of living marine resources, as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

21. The GFCM implements its policy and activities through the Secretariat and operates during the intersessional period by means of the following committees:

- Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ)

- Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC)
- Compliance Committee (CoC)
- Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF)

A. Thirty-ninth Session of the GFCM

22. The thirty-ninth session of the GFCM, including the sixth session of the CAF and the ninth session of the CoC, held in Milan, Italy, 25–29 May 2015, was attended by representatives from 23 Contracting Parties, three non-members as well as seven intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

23. In the context of the amendment process of the GFCM legal framework, the Commission examined and adopted by consensus its new rules of procedure and financial regulations, in line with the new GFCM Agreement, which came into force on 20 May 2014.

24. During the session, cooperating non-contracting party status was granted to Georgia and Ukraine in light of their increasing involvement in GFCM activities in the Black Sea. Moreover, in order to enhance cooperation with partner organizations, the Commission, based on a proposed set of objectives and activities, requested the GFCM Secretariat to finalize and sign, on behalf of GFCM/FAO, four new memoranda of understanding with MedPAN, ATLAFCO, OceanCare and EATIP.

25. A set of important measures for the management and conservation of fisheries' resources in both the Mediterranean and the Black Sea were discussed and agreed upon. In particular, the Commission adopted four recommendations, namely:

- i) Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/1: on the establishment of further precautionary and emergency measures in 2016 for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (GSA 17 and GSA 18);
- ii) Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2: on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom trawling fisheries of demersal stocks in the Straits of Sicily, pending the development and adoption of a multiannual management plan;
- iii) Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/3: on the establishment of a set of measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) in turbot fisheries in the Black Sea; and
- iv) Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/4: on management measures for spiny dogfish in the Black Sea.

26. The session also provided an opportunity for GFCM members to reaffirm their willingness to adopt measures to deter IUU fishing and to review progress made in the implementation of related road maps. In this respect, the Commission welcomed the initiative to proclaim an international day for the fight against IUU fishing. Necessary actions in this respect are being explored within the remit of FAO.

27. In light of the growing importance of the aquaculture sector in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, and building upon the outcomes of the Regional Aquaculture Conference held in December 2014, the Commission established a task force in charge of developing a “strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture”.

28. Finally, the Commission adopted its programme of work for the next intersession and approved, for the first time, its triennial budget (firm for the first two years) amounting to USD 2 359 564 for 2015 and USD 2 479 727 for 2016. The current mandate of the GFCM Bureau as well as those of CoC, CAF and the CAQ were exceptionally extended for a two-year term.