

MAP 1  
The Mediterranean Sea

# The Mediterranean Sea

FAO Statistical Area 37

## GEOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF THE REGION

The Mediterranean Sea is almost entirely landlocked between continents and is a deep sea with some areas of sea floor that reach depths of around 5 000 metres (m). The maximum depth is 5 121 m in the Matapan-Vavilov Deep, off the southern coast of Greece (Cartes *et al.*, 2004). The Strait of Gibraltar, in the western end of the Mediterranean, constitutes the only natural connection with the Atlantic Ocean. The strait is a shallow and narrow channel (320 m deep and 14 kilometres [km] wide). The Mediterranean is connected to the Black Sea through an even shallower channel of 70 m in its northeastern corner. Furthermore, it has been connected with the Red Sea since 1869, through the Suez Canal. A series of transverse ridges, with a north-south trend, subdivide the Mediterranean Basin morphologically and sections of these emerge above sea level (Sverdrup *et al.*, 1942, in Sardà *et al.*, 2004). One of these, between the island of Sicily and the African coast (sill depth of about 400 m) divides the basin into its western and eastern depressions. Representing less than 25 percent of the total basin area (Got *et al.*, 1942, 1985, in Sardà *et al.*, 2004), the continental shelves are considered narrow (Sardà *et al.*, 2004). However, the continental shelf is more expansive directly off the coasts of Tunisia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the southern Italian island of Sicily, as well as in the Adriatic (see Map 1).

## JURISDICTIONS IN THE REGION<sup>1</sup>

Although there is no legal obstacle to doing so, most of the Mediterranean states have not, to date, exercised their right to establish, implement or give effect to the claims on exclusive economic zones (EEZs). Some have, however, claimed EEZs (Papanicolopulu, 2007). All states have jurisdiction over territorial waters extending from a range of 3 to 12 nautical miles (nm), depending on the state concerned. As the majority of the states in the region have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the jurisdictions mostly extend out to 12 nm zones from the baseline. As a consequence, apart from the 12 nm territorial seas of each state and the proclaimed protected fishing/ecological zones, a major part of the Mediterranean is high seas, enjoying the restricted freedoms as set out in UNCLOS (Tudela *et al.*, 2004). Importantly, these high seas lie within close distances to the coasts, rendering their access easy and essentially open (Cacaud, 2005).

A variety of zones both in accordance with UNCLOS and *sui generis* zones have been declared, such as 12-nm contiguous zones adjacent to territorial seas, archaeological contiguous zones and *sui generis* zones including fisheries zones or fisheries protected zones and ecological protection zones (Papanicolopulu, 2007).

The Black Sea also has complicated jurisdictional issues with some states currently claiming the establishment of EEZs and trying to define the limits of their maritime jurisdictions.

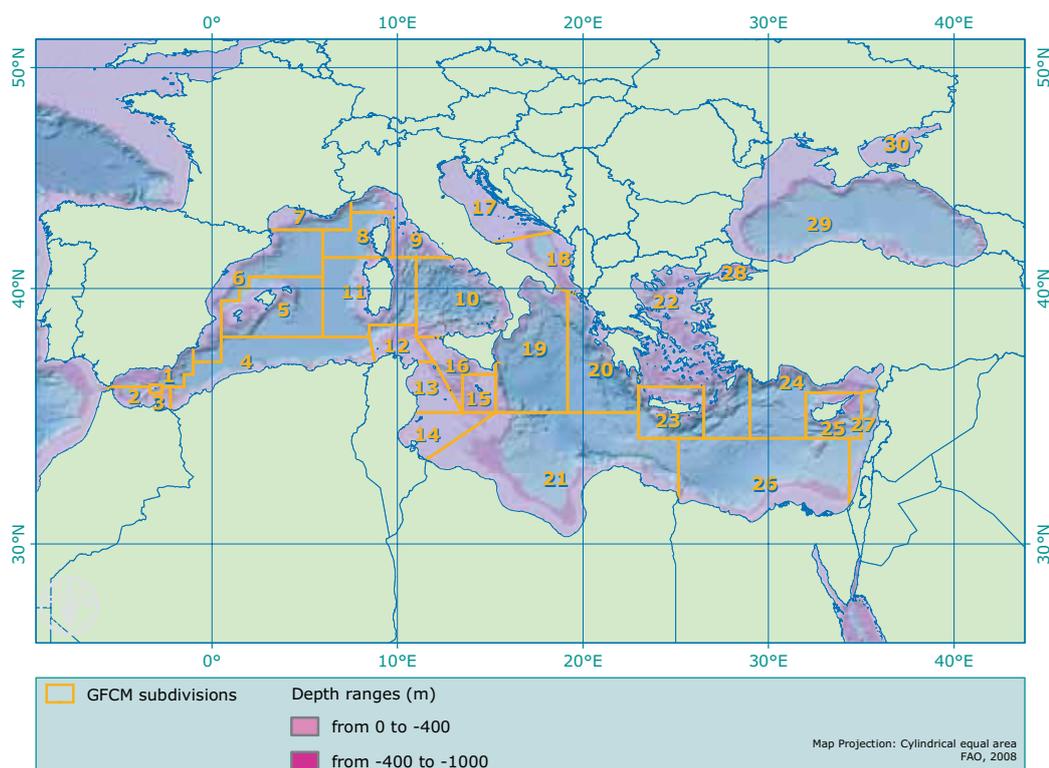
<sup>1</sup> This section is an informative and neutral summary on the regime pertaining to the exercise of jurisdiction by the coastal states concerned. It should not be interpreted as having legal relevance and/or implications of any kind.

## MANAGEMENT REGIME APPLICABLE TO DEEP-SEA BOTTOM FISHERIES IN THE HIGH SEAS

### Regional Fisheries Management Organization/Arrangement

The Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), under the provisions of Article XIV of the FAO Constitution, was approved by the FAO Conference in 1949 and entered into force in 1952<sup>2</sup> (see Map 2 for the Convention Area). The objectives of GFCM are to promote the development, conservation, rational management and best utilization of living marine resources, as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean, Black Sea and connecting waters (FAO Statistical Area 37).<sup>3</sup> GFCM has the authority to adopt binding recommendations for fisheries conservation and management in its Convention Area. Membership is open to both Mediterranean coastal states and regional economic organizations as well as to United Nations member states whose vessels engage in fishing in Mediterranean waters. Currently, there are 23 member countries, together with the European Community.<sup>4</sup> GFCM studies and responds to matters pertaining to deep-sea fisheries through Subcommittees and Working Groups. Those relevant to this review include Working Groups on Demersal Species, Stock Assessment Methodologies and on Bycatch and Incidental Catch.

Table 1 provides an overview of the various Geographical Sub-Areas (GSAs) of the Mediterranean discussed in this review, as well as their depth range and likely jurisdiction (concluded through Geographic Information System [GIS] analysis).



MAP 2  
The GFCM Convention Area (the Mediterranean, Black Sea and connecting waters) and Geographical Sub-Areas (GSAs)

<sup>2</sup> Amendments to the Agreement were approved in 1963, 1976 and 1997.

<sup>3</sup> This review, however, mainly focuses on the Mediterranean Sea.

<sup>4</sup> Members of GFCM include: Albania, Algeria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, European Community, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey. <http://www.gfcm.org/gfcm/about/5> (Accessed 5 August, 2008).