



<b>GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN</b>
<b>Twenty-Fourth Session</b>
<b>12-15 July 1999, Alicante, Spain</b>
<b>INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES</b>

1. This paper summarizes the main activities that have been carried out by Members of the Commission and its Secretariat since the Twenty-third Session, held in July 1998. The conclusions of the First Session of the newly established Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) held in March 1999 are not reported in the document as a special working paper is prepared to this effect (GFCM/XXIV/99/2).

#### **I. Follow-up to the conclusions of the Twenty-third Session**

2. The Twenty-third Session of GFCM was mainly devoted to the discussions on its own restructuring. There were no decisions or recommendations *per se* made by GFCM at this Session. However, emphasis was laid on the necessity to "improve the overall quality and reliability of GFCM statistical and information systems". *The project COPEMED is making progress in this direction.*

3. The Commission agreed to review the future of the Working Party on Fisheries Economics and Statistics (paragraph 29 of the report). A *proposal for the setting-up of a Sub-Committee on Fishery Statistics (SCFS) and a Sub-Committee on Economics and Social Sciences (SCES) was made to the First Session of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) which endorsed it.*

4. The Commission requested the Secretariat (paragraph 38) "to advise the Commission on possible amendments to the Rules of Procedure to incorporate consensus into the rules governing the operations of SAC". *The Secretariat will report on this matter at the Session.*

5. The Commission recommended to hold the First Session of SAC in Rome in December 1998. *This Session was organized from 23 to 26 March 1999 in Rome.* The delays were caused by administrative constraints. The Commission decided also to hold the Second Session of SAC in Rome, one month before the Twenty-fourth Session of the GFCM. *The Second Session met in June 1999;* a summary of its conclusions is available as information document GFCM/XXIV/99/Inf.4.

6. Concerning the programme of work for the last intersessional period, it was recommended by the Twenty-third Session of GFCM that priority be given to the holding of the statutory meetings. The Second Session of the Committee on Aquaculture has been postponed to the year 2000 for reasons of financial and administrative constraints.

7. The Commission could not reach an agreement on a scale of contributions to an autonomous budget. The Secretariat carried out broad consultations during the intersessional period with several members of the Commission with a view to the preparation of a new proposal that would be more acceptable to the Commission. *An Extraordinary Session will be organized back-to-back to the present regular one to review the new proposal and to agree on a scale that meets the concerns of its Members.* The report of the Extraordinary Session is available as an information document (GFCM/XXIV/99/Inf.5).

8. Finally, the Commission decided to "hold an Extraordinary Session on the scheme and scale of contribution for an autonomous budget in spring 1999". *Such a session will be held back-to-back to the present Twenty-fourth Session, following a financial contribution from the European Community.*

## **II. Ad hoc GFCM/ICCAT Joint Working Group on Stocks of Large Pelagic Fishes in the Mediterranean Sea (Genova, Italy, 7-12 September 1998)**

9. The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Update information on fisheries and research in the Mediterranean Sea;
- Update and/or revise, process and interpret data on catch landings, fishing effort, the size frequencies of fish caught, critically reviewing the revisions;
- Estimate the catch-at-size and -age;
- Review new information on CPUE; and
- Make recommendations on future research and fisheries management in the light of new information and past recommendations for bluefin tuna and swordfish. The meeting was

well attended by experts from Greece, France, Italy, Japan, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and USA.

10. The meeting reviewed very large upward revisions of data on catch landings in the 1990s, which were proposed:

- both species by Italy, Morocco and Tunisia; and
- bluefin only also by Morocco.

11. These revisions have resulted from comprehensive reviews of data. In some countries, they were stimulated by recently joining ICCAT and by the need to fulfil their requirements for data provisions.

12. In the case of bluefin, the revised landings will form a reference for recommended reductions of catches in respect to those in 1993 and 1994. In the case of swordfish, the change proposed by Morocco involves the assignment, to the Mediterranean Sea, of some of the catches previously assigned to the Atlantic, where management measures are imposed (total allowable catches).

13. For swordfish, the meeting was of the opinion that there would be little benefit from carrying out another stock assessment before there were significant improvements in input data and other information, which were regarded as unlikely to be achieved in one year. Therefore, it was recommended that another meeting of the *ad hoc* GFCM/ICCAT Working Group on Large Pelagic Fishes in the Mediterranean Sea should be held specifically on swordfish in two to three years time. However, the meeting was concerned about:

- very large catches of very small swordfish, of which magnitude and impact are uncertain; and
- various biological warning signs.

14. Therefore, it recommended reducing the fishing pressure on the swordfish, in particular of juveniles, if managers want to be assured of maintaining the Mediterranean stock of swordfish. This recommendation was made consistent with the precautionary approach to fisheries management, taking into account that the status of stock is highly uncertain or in fact, unknown. Inadequate basic fisheries data are one of the main reasons for the uncertainty in the stock status.

15. Comprehensive recommendations for the data collection and other research have been completed for swordfish to improve significantly the available limited data and other information required for stock assessment.

### **III. Activities of the Cooperation Networks to facilitate Coordination to Support Fisheries Management in the Western and Central Mediterranean (COPEMED)**

16. **Research activities on bluefin tuna and swordfish** were continued. The majority of the member countries have joined this common research project which will be a continuing task aiming at providing GFCM/ICCAT Commissions and Working Groups with reliable data on the status of the stocks in the Western Mediterranean basin. Research institutes in member countries are engaged in this common study assisted by COPEMED in financing training, sampling, data collection, biological parameters collection, compilation and setting up of a database.

17. **Research on deep-sea shrimps:** The contribution of COPEMED is to finance the participation of non-EC members to the study which aimed at the description of the fisheries, i.e. estimate of the resources, identification of socio-economic parameters, evaluation of the fishing effort, and potential for sustainable exploitation of these resources. This common activity involves European countries as well as North African countries.

18. **Port sampling network:** A workshop was conducted in France in October 1998 on the analysis of the existing structure and on the standardization of methodology to be applied in a port sampling network. As a follow-up to this working group, a sampling programme was initiated in some countries. Others are expected to join in the near future. The sampling programme concentrated on shared stocks and thus varied from one country to another as regards to the number of species concerned.

19. **Artisanal fisheries:** As a follow-up to the first meeting on artisanal fisheries, in March 1998 in Malta, that identified a common definition of artisanal fisheries, a second meeting was organized in May 1999 in Tunisia in order to compile and analyse standardized data collected in COPEMED member countries. The meeting was to provide an updated picture on fishing gears, fish resources, fishing communities, seasonalities and fishing grounds of artisanal fisheries.

#### **20. Dissemination of information**

- A list of fishing fleets over 15 m in length of different COPEMED countries has been prepared by COPEMED and presented to GFCM.
- Database on research and development including existing infrastructures (institutions, human resources, research progress, scientific equipment, etc.) has been established.

- Multimedia encyclopedia of living marine resources in the Mediterranean was prepared and will be available for the meeting.
- A virtual library was launched including summaries of all GFCM and COPEMED documents and reports and in the future will include all the grey literature.
- A second workshop on the analysis of the COPEMED information system issued in June 1997 will be held in Sardinia. The workshop will review the follow-up activities to the first workshop and draft a programme of work for the next period.

21. **Training activities:** A training need assessment was carried out in three southern member countries. Seven fields of training have been identified at the institutional level. A consultant has recently carried out a critical revision on the fishery strategies and research programmes of the interested countries.

22. **Workshop on the Geographical Information System (GIS):** A workshop on existing projects using GIS that are underway in the Mediterranean was organized in December 1998 in Malaga.

#### **IV. Expert Consultation on Article 9 of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries**

23. A Consultation on the Application of Art. 9 of the CCRF (Aquaculture Development) will be organized with the financial assistance of the Italian Government. The Consultation, which is in support of the activities of the GFCM Committee on Aquaculture, was sponsored also on the basis of the recommendation of COFI to member countries to support the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF). The meeting will take place in Rome from 19 to 23 July 1999 at FAO Headquarters. The conclusions of the Consultation will be reported to the Twenty-fifth Session of GFCM.

#### **V. Activities of the aquaculture networks**

24. Activities carried out in the intersessional period for the four aquaculture networks (SIPAM, TECAM, SELAM and EAM) included the following:

- **SIPAM Network:** The annual meeting of SIPAM national coordinators took place in Olhao, Portugal from 17 to 19 September. The meeting revised the situation of the network national units. It discussed the inclusion of additional countries, and the visit of the regional coordinator to Turkey. In addition aspects of data management related to the various data bases of the SIPAM system were treated, in particular those referring to quality

of the data entered by the countries, frequency of data exchange, reference tables and formats of national reports. The second release of SIPAM was presented and to utilize the additional capabilities the meeting recommended that the organization of the national networks with secondary units be started. The network has also organized a training course on the premises of the IAMZ, Zaragoza (Spain) on the new release of the software, SIPAM 02. On the occasion of this course, four new countries adhered to the system: Algeria, Bulgaria, Libya and Romania.

- **TECAM Network:** An Expert Consultation for the Preparation of a Database on Health Management in Mediterranean Aquaculture was held at FAO Headquarters in Rome, from 14 to 16 December 1998. A seminar on Advances in Research on Species Diversification for Aquaculture was held on IAMZ premises, Zaragoza (Spain) from 24 to 28 May 1999. This is the third meeting on this topic held by the TECAM network. The preparation of surveys, in collaboration with CIHEAM, on aquaculture nutrition, aquaculture genetics and aquaculture health management aspects has been started. The purpose of these surveys is to identify the existing capabilities for the preparation of specialized directories of experts and institutions also in support to the directories of the SIPAM system.
- **SELAM Network:** The work of this network has been supported within the framework of the agreement established between FAO and the Italian Institute ICRAM, in particular in the area of marketing and in the testing in Italy of the APS software for techno-economic verification of projects. The continuation of work on marketing of aquaculture products has been assisted also by IFREMER. A survey of capabilities on aquaculture marketing has been started in collaboration with CIHEAM. The organization of a Seminar on Global Quality Assessment for Aquaculture Products in the Mediterranean has been initiated. The meeting should take place in late 1999.
- **EAM Network:** As proposed at the Twenty-third Session of GFCM, as partner institute of the GFCM aquaculture networks, CIHEAM has replaced MAP PAP/RAC in the organization of activities related to aquaculture and environment. The organization of a Seminar on Environmental Impact Assessment of Mediterranean Aquaculture Farms, to be held at IAMZ, Zaragoza (Spain) in January 2000 has been commenced through an organizational meeting.

## VI. Suggested Action by the Commission

25. The Commission is invited to review the activities undertaken and the conclusions of the meeting held during the intersessional period and to

advise on the follow-up actions to be carried out by both the Secretariat and the Members of the Commission during the next intersessional period. The Commission may wish to identify issues to be included in the programme of work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.