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MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF THE FAO REGIONAL PROJECTS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This document summarizes the most significant activities carried out by the FAO Regional Projects, namely, *AdriaMed*¹, *MedsudMed*² and *MedFisis*³, during the intersessional period of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). These activities included research and training programmes, workshops and working groups as well as the technical assistance provided in support to specific country and the SAC, its Sub-Committees and Working groups. The document also provides information on progress made in the implementation of the second phase of *CopeMed*⁴, the launching of *EastMed*⁵, and the preparation of a *GEFMed*⁶ Programme proposal. It reproduces information as

¹ “*Scientific Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea*”. The project is co-financed by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies (MiPAAF) and the European Community.

² “*Assessment and Monitoring of the Fishery Resources and Ecosystems in the Straits of Sicily*”. The project is financed by the MiPAAF.

³ “*Mediterranean Fisheries Statistics and Information System*”. The project is jointly financed by the European Community and FAO.

⁴ “*Advice, Technical Support and Establishment of Cooperation Networks to Facilitate Coordination to Support Fisheries Management in the Western and Central Mediterranean*”. Phase one of the Project was financed by the *Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional*. The second phase is expected to be co-financed by the *Secretaría de Pesca Marítima de España, Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional* and the European Community.

⁵ “*Scientific and Institutional Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean*”. The preparatory phase for this project has been financed by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies (MiPAAF). The project will be co-financed by the MiPAAF, the Government of Greece and the European Community.

⁶ “*Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem – Regional Component: Implementation of agreed actions for the protection of the environmental resources of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal areas*”/Biodiversity Component., entitled : ‘*Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Biological Biodiversity of Vulnerable Coastal and Marine Resources of the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem*’. The Programme is prepared under the responsibility of UNEP/MAP on behalf of the Global Environment Facilities (GEF).

provided by the respective regional project Coordinator to ninth session of the Scientific Advisory Committee.

II. ADRIAMED

2. The activities carried out during the intersessional period followed the methodological approach used by the Project, and are presented according to the main components. They followed the 2006 workplan as approved by the AdriaMed Coordination Committee, which included the continuation of research programmes, workshops, training programmes as well as the technical assistance given to the countries and the cooperation of the Project with other relevant institutions. The eight meeting of the Coordination Committee of the Project AdriaMed was held from 12th to 13th December 2006, in Tirana, Albania, as guests of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration of the Republic of Albania. During the meeting the workplan for 2007 was discussed and agreed.

Shared Fishery Resources (demersal and small pelagic)

3. The project achieved the following:

- The *AdriaMed Database on Shared Demersal Fisheries Resources of the Adriatic Sea* was published on the Project web pages, and contains the relevant information on thirteen species. It is based on the AdriaMed Technical Document N. 12. Additional information on legislation was collected using the AdriaMed Technical Document N. 14 and genetic data were compiled using the AdriaMed IPUAS (Identification of Population Units in Adriatic Sea Shared Stocks by Genetic Structure Analysis) data.
 - A meeting of the *AdriaMed Working Group on Shared Demersal Fisheries Resources* was held at the Laboratory of Marine Biology and Fisheries (Fano, Italy, 26-28 April 2006). The meeting dealt with specific technical issues, such as nursery areas, the Adriatic databases, and the identification of indicators for fisheries management. The workplan for the future activities was discussed, in particular the trawl surveys programme for Autumn 2006 was established.
 - *International bottom trawl survey*: The AdriaMed trawl survey, planned to be carried out in autumn 2005, was done in Croatian and Albanian waters in February 2006 due to technical problems and bad weather conditions. The same difficulties were experienced in the other countries on the Eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, where it was not possible to carry out the survey.
 - *Identification of nursery areas*: this activity was pursued for some shared stocks in GSA 17 and on the basis of a scientific contribution entitled "Nursery area of some demersal species in the Adriatic Sea (GSA 17)". A similar contribution for GSA 18 was presented in a preliminary format at the Working group on Shared Demersal Fisheries Resources (Fano, Italy, April 2006). These outputs were presented to the Sub-Committee on Stock Assessment (SCSA) (Rome, Italy 11 - 14 September 2006).
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- ***Indicators and reference points for Adriatic Sea fisheries management:*** The work carried out so far by the Project on this issue, was updated and the paper “Applicability and performance of some biological and economic indicators for the Adriatic Sea trawl fisheries in the western GFCM GSA 18” was finalised .
- A meeting of the *AdriaMed Working Group on Small Pelagic Fisheries Resources* was held (Ancona, Italy, 15-19 May 2006). Presentations focused on the appraisal of the Adriatic small pelagic fishery resources, the use of biological indicators, review of an economic perspective of the sector and the applicability of the Operational Units concept to small pelagic fisheries.
- ***Assessment of small pelagic fish*** in GSA 18 (eggs and larvae): the results of the anchovy biomass survey carried out in the waters of Serbia and Montenegro in 2005 were finalised. Trawl data and DEPM data were combined to estimate average spawning biomass. These results were presented at the SCSA.

Social and Economic Fishery Sciences

- ***Indicators and reference points:*** a socio-economic analysis of the small pelagic fishery in the western Adriatic (GSAs 17 and 18) was carried out using 25 indicators (19 economic and 6 social) in cooperation with IREPA (Italy). Trends of these indicators between 1997 and 2004 were analysed using the Traffic Light method. These results were presented to the Sub-Committee on Economic and Social Sciences (SCSS) (Rome, Italy. 11-14 September 2006).
- An online database on the *fishery regulations in the Adriatic Sea* was developed. It is based on the AdriaMed Technical Document N°14 entitled “General outline of marine capture fisheries legislation and regulations in the Adriatic Sea Countries”. The database provides background information on legislative topics of importance to marine capture fisheries in the Adriatic countries. The regulations were organised into five main topics: a) International cooperation and participation to regional bodies; b) Access regimes to fisheries resources; c) Definitions of terms; d) Management and conservation measures, and e) Monitoring, control and surveillance. These regulations are fully updated to September 2004. The database was presented to the SCSS. It complements the *database for bottom trawl fishery regulations* in the Adriatic Sea which purpose is to produce a set of relevant thematic charts for the area. The database presently includes fishery regulations, including management measures relevant to bottom trawl fishery in Albania, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro as well as from Italy. Information on prohibited zones, fishing closed areas, marine parks, deposits of ammunition areas, gas platforms as well as submarine cables is recorded.

Adriatic Fishery Statistics and Information Systems

- ***Information on Aquatic and Fishery Sciences.*** Following approval by the ASFA Secretariat, the project took steps to transform the Project Web site into a Technical Backup Centre for the region. After a training course held in April 2005, the Croatian Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Split initiated the establishment of a ASFA national centre. Another training course was organized in Split in July 2006 on ASFA input methodologies using the new version of the www-ISIS-ASFA software.
- ***The AdriaMed Information System*** (AIS) has been updated and further improved. Currently, the Project’s Web site hosts the following 10 databases: Adriatic Institutions (155), Fishing Ports (252), Fish Markets (27), Adriatic Libraries (211), Adriatic Links (210), AdriaMed Library (810), and AdriaMed Documents available (over 50 documents). In the section “Country Fishery Information”, basic information on geography, fisheries and aquaculture are

summarized for each country. Three new databases have been developed and published, respectively on: Adriatic Fisheries Legislation, Adriatic Shared Demersal Stocks and Adriatic publication Abstracts. The Adriatic Abstract database replicates over 4500 bibliographic records included in the ASFA database related to the Adriatic Sea fisheries. Moreover the databank on the Adriatic Shared Demersal Stock includes scientific information on the main shared fishery species. The updated AIS was presented to the SCSI.

- *The AdriaMed Website* was visited by an average of 14,841 users over the last year. Over 25699 pages per month have been visited and over 50494 Technical Documents have been downloaded in the last five years. New Project publications are disseminated through the mailing list, which includes 463 names.
- The AdriaMed *Trawl Survey Information System* (ATrIS) version 1.1 is the computerized system developed for organizing storing and undertaking the preliminary analysis of the dataset available following AdriaMed trawl surveys. The ATrIS was distributed to all the AdriaMed institutes. At the moment there are nine Adriatic research institutions using ATrIS application. The Project is continuing to work on the development and upgrading of this application.
- *Support to national statistic systems*. The support to the national statistic systems in the project participating countries is being continued in Albania, in cooperation with the MedFisic Project.
- AdriaMed, in cooperation with the GFCM, collected and compiled all the publication issued so far by the GFCM (since 1952) and realized a CD-Rom with bibliographic records including keywords and abstracts. The CD-Roms were distributed during the 9th GFCM SAC meeting held in Rome, October 2006.

Interactions between aquaculture and capture fisheries

4. Base-line data on published studies and reports (from 1976 to 2006) related to the issue was compiled including information on source, topics and geographical areas as well as a critical review on the “interactions between capture fisheries and aquaculture” based on literature obtained. This review covers issues related to the environmental dimension of fishery system. The Project is preparing in cooperation with the Albanian Fisheries Directorate a programme for the implementation of a Pilot Study on the Lezha Lagoon (Albania) focusing on the interaction between fisheries, including aquaculture and the environment. In addition, the proceedings of the AdriaMed Expert Consultation on the interactions between aquaculture and capture fisheries in the Adriatic Sea (November 2003) were finalized and issued in the GFCM Studies and Reviews series (No 78).

III. MEDSUDMED

5. MedSudMed aims to support the scientific communities of the project participating countries in the development of a monitoring system for the studies of fisheries resources and ecosystems in the Project area (GSAs: 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 21), with particular focus on standardised methodologies.

6. The intersessional activities were conducted according to the following project components: “Spatial distribution of demersal resources in the Project area and the influence of environmental factors and fishery characteristics”; “Small pelagic fish: stock identification and oceanographic processes influencing their abundance”; and “Fishery and Ecosystem Information System”. MedSudMed organized Working groups, training and cooperative research programs on demersal and

small pelagic species. The project also supported the participation of scientists in relevant meetings of SAC subsidiary bodies.

7. The fifth meeting of the Coordination Committee of the Project MedSudMed was held from 9th to 10th November 2006, in Rome, Italy, as guests of the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies. During the meeting the workplan for 2007 was discussed and agreed.

8. The activities carried out for 2006 followed the workplan approved by the MedSudMed Coordination Committee, as follows:

Demersal Resources:

- So far, the Project has focused on the description of the *spatial distribution* of hake and red mullet and on the identification of the areas of major concentrations of juveniles and mature females. This allowed tuning standardised methodology that was applied in all GSAs in the Project area. As a follow up, a 10-year data series was processed to delineate habitats used by different life phases of Hake in the Strait of Sicily. The study was carried out in GSAs 15 and 16 (South Sicily) where long data series were available. The results of the study were presented both at the EU STECF meeting on Sensitive and Essential Fish Habitats in the Mediterranean Sea (Rome, 6-10 March 2005) and at the SCSA (Rome, 11-14 September 2006).
- A Pilot study on “Spatial pattern of fisheries demersal resources, environmental factors and fishery activities” was undertaken in the GSA 15 (Malta Island) by scientists from the MCFS and the IAMC-CNR. A workshop was organised (Mondello, Italy, 17-18 July 2006) to present the main outputs of the study to representatives of all MedSudMed participating institutes. It took stock of similar studies conducted in the Project area and/or availability of data and information to perform similar studies in other zones of the Project area. The results of a work carried out by the Institut des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (INSTM) in GSA 14 (Gulf of Gabès) also fed the meeting; the objective was the identification of marine protected areas on the basis of an exhaustive description of the Gulf in terms of fishery activities, distribution of fish stocks, marine biodiversity; the overall scope was to identify areas that may benefit from closure to fishing. Both studies were presented to the SAC Sub-Committee on Marine Environment and Ecosystems (SCMEE) (Rome 11-14 September 2006).

Small Pelagic resources

- For this component, the Project invested much effort in collecting data in areas where existing information was rather too little or obsolete with a view to providing an overview of the **spatial distribution** of the stocks and identify the main **spawning and retention areas**. Accordingly, the Project supported the conduction of the following surveys at sea, including mixed country teams on board and during which on-the-job training was provided.
- *Cooperative acoustic surveys* (R/V “Dalla Porta”; 1-15 October 2005 and 26 June-2 July 2006) were conducted in cooperation with the Istituto per l’Ambiente Marino Costiero (IAMC-CNR). In agreement with the Malta Centre for Fisheries Sciences (MCFS) and the sampling area was extended to the Maltese territorial waters.

- *A cooperative ichthyoplankton survey* was conducted (12-24 August 2006) in the western part of the Libyan territorial waters on board the R/V “Urania” with the active cooperation of the Marine Biology Research Centre (MBRC) and the IAMC-CNR. The survey was the first one of this kind, since 1973. Its main objectives were the: (i) delineation of spawning areas of the target species (anchovy and round sardine); (ii) study of correlations between mesoscale physical structures and the distribution and abundance of small pelagic fish eggs and larvae and zooplankton; (iii) measurement of physical parameters with a multiparametric probe and (iv) analysis of sediments. In parallel, progress was made on the processing of data collected in 2005. Biological and environmental data belonging to different institutes were processed jointly to compare current hypothesis on transport and retention patterns of eggs and larvae.
- An analysis of environmental parameters was conducted at regional scale using a numerical model that was run over the period of five years (2000 to 2004). The outputs of the model consist in monthly average maps of temperature, current velocity and direction at different depth levels.

MedSudMed Fishery and Ecosystem Information System (FEIS)

9. Progress was made on the development of the **FEIS corporate database** and a first functioning version (FEIS1.0) was finalized and distributed. Import and export tools were developed in order to facilitate data exchange between national databases and the FEIS. So far, the database contains data on: trawl surveys, acoustic surveys, ichthyoplankton surveys, abiotic environment. Eventually, the FEIS regional corporate database will help providing an overview of the types of data available in the Project area, geographical position of the samples and time periods for which data are available. In order to facilitate the visualization of these data in GIS softwares, a spatial query tool was developed.

Training

10. In line with one of the main MedSudMed priorities, i.e. national capacity building, the following courses were organised during the intersession.

- *Training on collection and conservation of ichthyoplankton samples* on board the R/V “Hannibal” (Tunisia, 1-6 July). The Project took advantage of the survey carried out by INSTM in GSA 12 (Gulf of Tunis) to ensure the participation of a scientist from MBRC.
- *Training Course on Macroscopic identification of maturity stages of fisheries resources* (MBRC Tajura, Tripoli, 9-11 July 2006). The course provided a comprehensive overview of the techniques and scales used for the macroscopic identification of maturity stages of the main demersal fisheries species
- *Training course on age determination of Cephalopods and Crustaceans* (INSTM, La Goulette, Tunisia, 24-28 July 2006). The course provided an overview of the techniques used for the determination of age for selected species of cephalopods and crustaceans, through the analysis of length frequencies, as well as on the software most commonly used for the data processing.
- *Training course on trawl survey samples processing* (IAMC-CNR, Mazara del Vallo, Italy, 24-28 July). The course consisted mainly in providing an overview of the techniques and scale used for the macroscopic identification of maturity stages of main demersal species.

- **Training course for technical operators on marine biotoxins** (MBRC, Tajura, Libya, 17-21 September 2006). The course provided baseline information on several aspects dealing with marine biotoxins (basic knowledge of sanitary risks related to marine biotoxins, chemical methods for detection of biotoxins, legislative frame, microbiological methods for the detection of pathogen bacteria in seafood, methodology for identification and analysis of toxic phytoplankton). The work carried by the INSTM on the monitoring of marine biotoxins in fishery products in Tunisia was also presented.

IV. MEDFISIS

11. The MedFisis project is promoting and gradually developing a Mediterranean Fishery Statistics and Information System with the ultimate objective of achieving a region-wide integrated system as outlined by the MedStat adaptive approach⁷. Eventually, the system will be based on national fishery statistics systems, enhanced and standardised within the MedFisis framework to meet both national and regional (international) requirements. Central to the MedFisis concept is that the fundamental components of any fisheries management information system are the vessel record and catch and effort data.

12. CopeMed I, MedSudMed and AdriaMed have already been instrumental in introducing this standardized methodology in several countries. Recently, the project “EastMed formulation and preparatory phase” (GCP/INT/989/ITA) has made possible the implementation of some activities integrating the work done by MedFisis in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

13. During the intersession, the databases and information system have been conceptualised, engineered and are being developed and tested progressively. The main results are as follows:

Fishery statistics, information systems and development of databases

- The conceptual design and system engineering of the MedFisis/MedStat software has been progressively developed in interconnected modules (assemblies) to ensure easy and timely maintenance and incorporation of future developments. Systems established at the national fishery directorates level consist of a component common to all concerned countries and another component that reflects and addresses specific country requirements and characteristics. The standard common component will ensure that the regional and international requirements will be met.
- The MedFisis/MedStat database and information system to accommodate and manage the national **fishing vessel register** was developed and tested. It is now available to the fishery management authorities of six GFCM Members (Albania, Lebanon, Malta, Montenegro, Syria and Tunisia). A French language interface is also being developed.
- The new reengineered version of the catch and effort (**CAS**) **database software** is being developed in Object Oriented Programming.Net Framework[®]. As in the case of the most recent release of the MedFisis fishing vessel register database, this technical approach makes

⁷ Coppola, S.R. 2006. MedStat - An adaptive approach for the improvement of fishery statistical systems in the Mediterranean countries under FAO projects. *Studies and Reviews. General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean*. No. 79. Rome, FAO. 57 pp.

it possible to easily update a target software system. Concomitantly, the catch and effort software is being developed to be fully compatible with the fishing fleet database.

- The landing pattern by country and statistical area of the GFCM priority species was compiled and analysed. A working paper entitled “GFCM priority species: a simple information tool for the visualization of the open-access capture fisheries landing data” was discussed at the Sub-Committee on Statistics and Information (SCSI). Furthermore, a simple web-based tool for the easy and quick on-line visualization and preliminary analysis of the **priority species landings series** was developed. This information tool can provide additional information for the stock assessment and fisheries appraisal work within the SAC framework.
- Technical solutions and options for the **GFCM server** space acquisition and configuration were formulated. Design of the **new GFCM website** and information frame was initiated and a first conceptual mock-up was elaborated and submitted to the GFCM Secretariat, which also included technical options for establishing on-line data access and basic elaboration, data warehousing structure and related metadata.
- Technical assistance was provided to the GFCM Secretariat for the development and establishment of the GFCM record of vessels over 15 m authorized to operate in the GFCM area (also known as the “**white list**”, Recommendation GFCM/2006/1). An *ad hoc* database was developed to hold the vessel records transmitted to the GFCM Executive Secretary; and basic data quality and consistency checks were performed, with results being reported to the Secretary under the necessary confidentiality requirements.

Appraisal and support to national fishery statistics and information systems

- The Project analyzed and reviewed a first set of national **fishing vessel registers** of six countries in the Western, Central and Eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, the Egyptian databases are being appraised and revised. Review continued also in Tunisia. Preliminary technical discussion has been held with Turkish authorities. This procedure is expected to be progressively extended to other countries.
- As part of the assistance provided by the project staff to the EastMed preparatory phase, national and sub-regional data in Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey were collected and compiled. A **review document** on fisheries and related statistical systems in the Eastern Mediterranean area (“Brief introduction to the Eastern Mediterranean fisheries sector”) was produced and presented to the SCSI.
- A feasibility assessment for the implementation of **catch and effort survey** was carried out in Syria. Local fishery patterns and target resources were identified. Strategies and a work plan for the establishment of a routine national catch assessment survey are being formulated. As a follow-up to the feasibility assessment of the implementation of the catch and effort survey, a national training workshop on “Design and Implementation of Fishery Catch and Effort Assessment Surveys” was held in Syria. The workshop was attended by national fishery officers with four observers from Egypt and Lebanon. At the end of the workshop, an evaluation and planning meeting regarding the workplan and work strategy of the MedFis Project in some of the Eastern Mediterranean countries was organized with the representatives of Syria, Lebanon, Egypt.
- A critical review of the Egyptian fishery statistics system was initiated with the national management authorities. The current state of the national fishery statistics system for those

countries, as well as the results of the “Census of Lebanese Fishing Vessels and Fishing Facilities” were discussed at the SCSI.

- The Albanian Catch Assessment Survey data were thoroughly analyzed and a final technical report is being prepared. This will constitute a technical core as a base for the national routine catch and effort survey of marine capture fisheries. A working paper entitled “An overview of the Albanian fishing fleet and catch and effort dynamics”, which included the results of the CAS data, was prepared and presented to the SCSI. An *ad hoc* database to hold and manage records and data from the Albanian small-scale artisanal fishery was designed, developed and established in cooperation with the national Fisheries Directorate.

Contribution to regionalization and standardization

- The technical assistance provided to the GFCM, including its Secretariat and Committees (SAC and CAQ) has been gradually and consistently increased during the intersession. This included work on building a coherent **regional reference system** and an associated standardized codification within the core structure of national vessel registers, with those countries where a fishing vessel register exists or has been developed. The output of the national fishing fleet statistics has been standardized, and is consistent with GFCM requirements. Aquaculture terminology, statistics standardization and information flow have been promoted and supported through the **SIPAM** (Information System for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean) network renewal and development.

14. The future outlook for the Project will continue to follow the adaptive approach, and foreseeing design and implementation of catch and effort assessment surveys. It is expected that, in concerted synergy with the AdriaMed, MedSudMed, and the forthcoming CopeMed II and EastMed projects, MedFisis will continue the work performed so far. It will provide technical assistance to the GFCM Secretariat and to the member countries to develop and consolidate internationally compatible fishing vessel registers where needed and promote and establish catch and effort monitoring systems. The core software suite of the MedFisis fishery statistics and information system will be completed with the release of the marine fisheries catch and effort software application that, integrated with the fishing vessel register, constitutes a basic structure of the GFCM fisheries management system. A severe problem is constituted by the limited resources available for a project with such vast scope and geographical coverage. Adequate resources will need to be mobilized if MedFisis is to evolve to efficiently carry out its complex tasks both at national and international levels.

V. COPEMED

CopeMed Phase I

15. The first phase of CopeMed ended on 31st May 2005. During the intersession, the CopeMed website has been maintained and is fully accessible with all materials (e.g. virtual library) available to the users. Some relevant publications, initiated during the execution of CopeMed I were completed and are expected to be issued by CopeMed II. These are: the Atlas on demersal resources along the Spanish coast, the work on socio-economic indicators carried out in the south-western Mediterranean, and the popular book on the artisanal fisheries.

CopeMed Phase II

16. The second phase (henceforth referred to as CopeMed II) is expected to start early in 2007. The Project Document is being signed by the donors concerned and is being sent in advance to the CopeMed National Focal Points and contact persons for comments and suggestions which will be welcome and appreciated on the occasion of the Inception/Coordination Committee meeting of the project. CopeMed II will have an initial duration of three years.

17. CopeMed II will build on, consolidate and further develop the results obtained during CopeMed I, while ensuring technical assistance to those countries that benefited the first phase. The objective of the project aims at maintaining the sustainability of the marine fisheries in the Central and Western Mediterranean Sea by encompassing the biological, economical, social and institutional components of the fisheries systems concerned. The project will continue reinforcing the collaboration between the countries of the sub-region by supporting their scientific contribution and participation in the activities of SAC and the Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) as well as in selected activities of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

18. CopeMed II will give particular attention to the support of national and regional fisheries management processes in line with the indication set by the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. It will also support the establishment and implementation of scientifically based management plans for relevant specific fisheries, both in each participating country and at sub-regional level. This will be pursued mainly through coordinated scientific investigations, data-gathering and joint multi-disciplinary analyses. Pilot activities will be undertaken to support the sustainable development of the artisanal fisheries sector. In particular, the Project will focus on supporting and strengthening: the national capacity for fisheries statistics and bio-economic data collection; the scientific fisheries research activity in the national and international context; and the institutional fishery management framework and capacity at the national level (organization and network of fishery stakeholders, development of management strategies) and at the international level (cooperation between countries and with Regional Fisheries Organisations).

VI. EASTMED

Project Formulation and Preparatory Phase

19. At the 24th session (July 1999), the GFCM endorsed a proposal from SAC that a regional project be developed for the Eastern Mediterranean countries, similar to the FAO CopeMed and AdriaMed projects.

20. The whole preparatory phase leading to the formulation of the EastMed project was made possible through the Italian contribution to the "EastMed Project Formulation and Preparatory Phase". During the intersession period, the preparatory work and formulation of EastMed has been completed. A network of national contact persons has been established. It discussed the findings of the project formulation mission. A baseline information reference document entitled "Brief Introduction to Eastern Mediterranean Fisheries Sector" was completed. It encompasses relevant aspects and issues related to the Eastern Mediterranean national fishery administration structure, fishery statistical systems and fishery bio-ecology. It was presented at the EastMed briefing meeting referred to below as well as to SCSI.

21. On the basis of the findings and results of the formulation mission (late 2004; early 2005), a draft of the EastMed Project proposal was transmitted in May 2006 to the donors' representatives and to the concerned countries which met in June 2006, at FAO headquarters. At this meeting, the conceptual framework and technical contents of the project document were positively assessed.

22. In addition, the EastMed formulation phase supported the participation of scientists from the region to the Workshop on “Stock Assessment and Operation Units” (June 2006) and to the SCSI.

Project implementation phase

23. The technical formulation of the main phase of the EastMed project is basically completed. The project appears complex, involving concerns of up to eight participating countries and three different donors. At present, EastMed is going through the process leading to the formal submission to all interested parties.

24. EastMed has the ultimate objective of contributing to the sustainable development and management of marine fisheries, in compliance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. This will be pursued by supporting and improving the capacity of national fishery departments to increase their scientific and technical information base for fisheries management and to promote the development of consistent management plans in the sub-region.

25. It is expected that the project implementation strategy will rely on several guidelines: National capacity strengthening and assistance to the management authorities and research institutions to increase the knowledge on the fisheries and their resources; Support on a priority basis to those countries most in need of technical assistance (it is hoped that countries with strong expertise will cooperate in assisting those countries requiring support); Organization of fisheries data collection and analysis programmes with standardized methodologies; Promoting uniform fishery research and management system; Favours on-the-job training.

26. The Project technical execution was conceived to be carried out according to four components: Institutional Strengthening; Staff Training and Development through the two sub-components specifically addressed to scientists and managers, and to field staff and technicians; Data Collection and Analysis through four sub-components focussed on fishery data collection, fishery and stock assessment analysis, marine ecosystem characteristics, fishery resources appraisal survey; and Increased Participation and Cooperation.

27. Eventually, EastMed will integrate and complement the regional cooperation framework established by the other FAO-executed fishery projects operating in the Mediterranean.

VII. GEFMED

28. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) have been entrusted as implementing agency by the Global Environment Facilities (GEF-UNDP/World Bank) to prepare a Program entitled “Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem – Regional Component: Implementation of agreed actions for the protection of the environmental resources of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal areas”. The GEFMed will assist the eligible Mediterranean countries, i.e., 11 GFCM Members, to implement the two Strategic Action Plans (SAPs), namely SAP Med (addressing pollution from land-based activities) and SAP BIO (addressing loss of marine and coastal biodiversity) through a single programme.

29. Among the three technical components of the Programme, that can be assimilated to self-standing projects, Component II deals with biodiversity issues and will be implemented through a “project” entitled “Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Biological Biodiversity of Vulnerable Coastal and Marine Resources of the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem”.

30. During the intersession, the entities foreseen to execute component II, namely UNEP-RAC/SPA, FAO, the GFCM Secretariat and WWF-MedPO formulated accordingly a draft Project document of which the overall development objective is to “maintain the long-term function of the Mediterranean LME through the use of an ecologically-coherent network of protected areas combined with the sustainable use of renewable marine resources”. This project essentially provides an implementation phase to the Strategic Action Plan for the Conservation of Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Biological Diversity (SAP BIO) that was completed in 2003, with the participation of FAO which executed its fisheries component.

31. The project considered the following two components: (i) Component 1: Conservation of Coastal and Marine Diversity through Development of a Mediterranean MPA Network; the GFCM through its Secretariat is expected to participate in one activity, and (ii) Component 2: Promotion of the sustainable use of fisheries resources in the Mediterranean through ecosystem-based management approaches; the GFCM is expected to participate in all (seven)activities of this component, thereby directly supporting the work of SAC, especially of the SCMEE.

32. It was initially planned to submit the project to the GEF Council in December 2006, but this has been recently postponed.

VIII. SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

33. The Commission is invited to review the work performed by the FAO regional projects and provide comments and views, especially on those activities directly supporting the current scientific and technical priorities of SAC.