



GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION
FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN
COMMISSION GÉNÉRALE DES PÊCHES
POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE



GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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**REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE COMMITTEE
DURING THE INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This document complements the oral report of the Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). It provides a summary of the activities of the Committee covering the intersessional period 2005-2006, and especially describes the work of SAC through its Sub-Committees, their Working groups and Workshops as well as other activities conducted upon guidance from the GFCM.

2. It is worth recalling that the intersessional activities closely followed the Programme of work identified by the Eighth Session of SAC and further appraised and prioritized at the Thirtieth Session of GFCM, held in Istanbul, Turkey in January 2006. However, the activities reported below only refer partially to many other relevant undertakings that were carried out through the FAO regional projects, namely: AdriaMed, MedSudMed and MedFisis. Reference to major activities of the projects which encompass direct support to the subsidiary bodies of SAC is provided in document GFCM:SAC9/2006/3. Additional information on activities of relevance to SAC that are carried out by other national or regional projects are expected to be presented under agenda item four of this session through the integrated review of the national reports of SAC Members (document GFCM:SAC9/2006/Inf.11).

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II. ACTIVITIES OF THE SAC DURING THE INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD

Overview of SAC achievements

3. At its Thirtieth Session (January 2006), GFCM reviewed the report of the Eighth Session of SAC, assessed the set of proposed activities for the Committee for 2006, identified priority expected outcomes for each of the Sub-Committee and, on this basis agreed upon the Programme of work of SAC for the intersession¹. SAC had seven (7) months within which to implement its programme. All the **meetings** approved by the Commission were convened.

Meeting	Date and venue
Coordination Meeting of the Sub-Committees (CMSC)	15 September/Rome, Italy
Session of SCSA, including: Working Group on Demersal Species; Working Group on Small Pelagic Species	11–14 September/Rome, Italy
Session of the SCESS	11–14 September/Rome, Italy
Session of the SCSi	11–14 September/Rome, Italy
Session of the SCMEE including the Workshop on Interaction between Cetacean and Fishing Activities	11–14 September/Rome, Italy
SCSi/SCSA/SCESS transversal Workshop on Stock assessment and Operational Units	26–28 June/Rome, Italy
SCSi/SCSA/SCESS transversal Workshop on Fishing effort parameters Identification and Measurement Standardization	30–31 May/Malaga, Spain
First SCSA Permanent Working Group on Stock Assessment Methodologies	8–10 March/Istanbul, Turkey

4. The Twenty-ninth Session of GFCM formally established the **Coordination Meeting of the Sub-Committee (CMSC)**. During the intersession, the CMSC held a short informal meeting following the Sub-Committee sessions (September 2006), at which it was decided that a formal meeting will be convened on the 24th of October, just prior to the SAC session. The outcome of these meetings will be summarized and made available to the Committee for information and record, as document GFCM:SAC9/2006/Inf.9.

5. During the intersession, the Coordinators of the Sub-Committees and Facilitators of Working groups collaborated actively with the Chairperson of SAC and the Secretariat. This included drawing up agendas, holding meetings and liaising with the various experts participating in the networks of the Sub-Committees. As a result, the **participation** of experts in the meetings exceeded overall the good

¹ Report of the 30th Session, paragraphs 50-51.

performance noted in 2004². The number of GFCM Members represented in the meetings increased slightly, although only the Sub-Committee on Stock Assessment (SCSA) just exceeded one third (37%) of the Commission membership. It was hoped that with the launching of CopeMed II and of EastMed, the situation would further improve in 2007. Nonetheless, the number of **scientific contributions** presented in each Sub-Committee also tended to increase. However, it was noted with concern that both SCSA and its Working groups on small-pelagic and on demersal species tended to behave more as a congress or symposium than an operational output oriented technical meeting, with limited proper assessments being made, presented or validated.

6. It should further be noted that, in line with the request made by GFCM over recent years³ to **strengthen cooperation** with partner Mediterranean conservation and management institutions, the work, especially of the Sub-Committee on Marine Environment and Ecosystems (SCMEE) was greatly enhanced through joint activities, in particular with UNEP (RAC/SPA); IUCN; WWF; and ACCOBAMS. In this context, it might be advisable initiating, when relevant the formalization of this collaboration to further harmonize respective medium terms programmes of work, through arrangements such as Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) between these institutions and GFCM⁴.

Sub-Committees, Working groups and Workshops

7. As shown in the table above, the four (4) Sub-Committees held their respective session in parallel, late September 2006. The recent practice of treating under a common umbrella those cross-sectional issues requiring strong interface among the Sub-Committees was pursued, especially with regard to activities related to the Operational Unit Framework and with the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF), thereby favouring multidisciplinary exchanges and harmonization of views among concerned scientists.

8. The reports of the Working groups and Workshops held during the intersession are provided in the report of the respective parent Sub-Committee, e.g. the report of the **Workshop on Cetaceans and Fishing Activities** is provided in the report of the SCMEE. As an exception, the report of the first meeting of the **Permanent Working group on Stock assessment Methodologies (PWGAM)** is provided separately from the report of the SCSA, as document GFCM:SAC9/2006/Inf.14. The reports of the transversal meetings, that are, respectively of the **Workshop on Stock assessment and Operational Units** and of the **Workshop on Fishing effort parameters Identification and Measurement Standardization** are reproduced as documents GFCM:SAC9/2006/Inf.12 and 13.

9. During the intersession, the Sub-Committees focused respectively on main areas, as follows;

- The Sub-Committee on Statistics and Information (**SCSI**) fine tuned the outcomes of the above mentioned two transversal Workshops, including updating the SAC stock assessment forms to integrate fleet segments and nominal fishing effort units as well as finalizing the Operational Unit (OU) matrix and related data collection form (“GFCM Task 1 table”). SCSI

² In 2006 : one hundred experts of which 49% SCSA; 28%SCMEE;13% SCSI and 10% SCESS. In 2004: 65 experts of which 24.6 % SCSA; 27.7%SCMEE; 26.2 % SCSI; 21.5% SCESS.

³ This was reiterated in paragraph 16 of the Report of the 30th session, with special reference to the identification of sensitive areas and the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF).

⁴ These institutions enjoy the statute of Observers with GFCM. Cooperation is already formalized through the FAO with existing MoUs. These are “umbrella” covering multisectoral fields of cooperation, including fisheries. As such, they are supposed to formally cover activities with GFCM as well, but do not mention the Commission nor any specification of technical and scientific area for short/medium term joint undertakings.

also reviewed selected national and sub-regional fisheries statistical and information systems with the view to guiding the GFCM Secretariat, through the FAO MedFisis project, on the designing of the GFCM regional databases and information system, including the FAO FishStat Mediterranean database and Fishery Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS). The Sub-Committee noted the need to ensure more consistency in the nomenclature and titles of the GFCM geographical sub-areas (GSAs). It also acknowledged progress made to follow-up on Recommendation GFCM/2005/2 on the establishment of a record of fishing vessels over 15 metres in length authorized to operate in the GFCM Area⁵. The report of the SCSA is quoted GFCM:SAC9/2006/Inf.6.

- The Sub-Committee on Economic and Social Sciences (**SESS**) concentrated its work on active contribution on identifying the socio-economic variables related to the Operational Unit concept for the GFCM Task 1 table, and on fishing effort parameters for promoting the standardization of its measurement in all Member countries. SESS also reviewed fish trade flux issues with the view to assessing impact on fisheries management. It launched an analysis on the legislative and socio-economic status of recreational fisheries and reviewed the possible role of sociological indicators in fisheries monitoring. The report of SESS is quoted GFCM:SAC9/2006/Inf.7.
- The **SCME** put emphasis on the impact of fishing on protected and/or threatened species, including cetaceans, turtles and sharks. Focus also entailed the harmonization with international partner organizations of research programmes related to marine ecosystems, particularly in conjunction with the identification of sensitive areas, including possible restricted fishing zones (thereby following up on Recommendation GFCM/2005/1 on the management of certain fisheries exploiting demersal and deepwater species), and the implementation of the EAF.
- Concerning the **SCSA** and with reference to the request from GFCM⁶ which stressed the need that a major number of stocks, especially shared stocks, and of GSAs should be covered by the Sub-Committees, it can be noted that the SCSA reviewed, in 2006, 30 assessments, of which six (6) shared stocks, covering ten (10) species in nine (9) GSAs. This compares with the year 2005, when the SCSA reviewed 22 assessments of 20 stocks (nine demersal and 11 small pelagic), including one shared stock, covering seven (7) GSAs. In addition, in 2006, more use was made of the results of the MEDITS trawl survey Programme. It can also be noted that the SCSA did not find it opportune to consolidate the terms of reference of its Permanent Working group on assessment methodology. However, some participants stressed the need to promote training courses on new methodologies, possibly through partner institutions such as CIHEAM/IAMZ. The report of the SCSA is quoted GFCM:SAC9/2006/Inf.8.

10. The relevant conclusions and suggestions of the Working groups and Workshops as endorsed by the respective Sub-Committee, as well as the advice and recommendations of each Sub-Committee are summarized in document GFCM:SAC9/2006/4. They are expected to be presented to SAC by the concerned Sub-Committee Coordinator. The outcomes of the Sub-Committees are therefore not dealt with in this document.

Selected pending issues

⁵ Report of the 29th Session, Appendix G.

⁶ Paragraph 64 of the Report of the 29th Session

11. As in 2005, no meeting of the **Joint GFCM/ICCAT *ad hoc* Working group on Large pelagic species in the Mediterranean** was scheduled for 2006. It can be recalled in this respect that at its Eighth session, SAC favoured the collection of all relevant data and information on the swordfish fishery with the view to identifying technical management measures and suggested that a meeting of the Joint Working group be organized accordingly, taking into account that at its Twenty-ninth session GFCM acknowledged the need that this subsidiary body be endowed with multidisciplinary capacity through consolidating its mandate. At its Thirtieth session, the Commission⁷ invited the Secretariat to assess the main results of the Joint Working group since its establishment, with the view to facilitating the programming of its future activities. Accordingly, a preliminary draft paper is made available (document GFCM:SAC9/2006/Inf.10) for information and further possible technical guidance from SAC. Potential outcome of the session (Madrid, Spain, October 2006) of the ICCAT Scientific Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) might complement the assessment. The Committee may, in addition, provide guidance on follow up action required to cope with the ascertainment made in 2004 by the Joint working group in relation to small tunas, billfish and albacore.

12. The **Fishery Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS)** is an information network of international organizations established under a formal Partnerships Arrangement. At present, FIRMS draws together a unified partnership of nine (9) Regional Fishery Bodies⁸ (RFBs) and FAO. The roles of FAO in FIRMS are twofold: i) FAO provides the Secretariat and maintenance of the system, and ii) it is a data contributor with its Global reviews, and on regional basis, on behalf of five (5) FAO Statutory RFBs, including the GFCM⁹. The FIRMS fisheries module is under development and a first version should be ready around the end of 2006. With regard to the Mediterranean, it will host and disseminate the inventory of Adriatic fisheries done in close collaboration with Adriamed and enable links to the corresponding Operational Units. The FIRMS stock module was demonstrated to the SCSI session which acknowledged the usefulness of this information system. At the third FIRMS Steering Committee meeting (Madrid, Spain, February 2006) a Recommendation was made to invite GFCM to formally join the FIRMS partnership arrangement, notably in view of the Commission recent full-fledged functional autonomy. SAC may wish to advise the Commission on the opportunity to be an independent partner in the FIRMS arrangement.

13. In relation to Recommendation GFCM/2006/1¹⁰ on the management of certain fisheries exploiting demersal and small pelagic and particularly element to be identified to develop **management programmes of the fishing effort**, the limited progress achieved should be emphasized and clear guidance might be necessary to cope with this state of affair.

14. At the Thirtieth session of GFCM, a draft Recommendation related to the **Pelagos Sanctuary** for the Conservation of marine mammals proposed to the Commission. After its review, the Commission decided¹¹ that this proposal would be subject to further scrutiny by SAC and would be considered at the next GFCM plenary session. During the intersession, SCMEE reviewed background scientific evidence in relation to the Pelagos Sanctuary, but refrained to provide an unequivocal statement. A

⁷ Paragraph 72-73 of the Report of the 30th Session.

⁸ These are: CCAMLR; the CCSBT; IATTC; ICCAT; ICES; IOTC; NAFO; SEAFDEC; and EUROSTAT.

⁹ FIRMS contains the inventory of 36 GFCM shared stocks, 6 of which have status and trends information.

¹⁰ Appendix E of the Report of the 30th Session of GFCM (document GFCM/SAC9/2006/Inf.3). Paragraph 3 of the Recommendation requested SAC to identify in 2006 for the concerned fisheries: the reference year, the Operational Units, fishing effort parameters and to transmit to GFCM the results of this identification.

¹¹ Paragraph 35 of the Report of the 30th Session

GFCM Member therefore requested the Secretariat to put before SAC the information enclosed in document GFCM:SAC9/Inf.15 to favour the scrutiny of the Committee.

III. SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE

15. The Committee is invited to review and discuss the intersessional activities of its subsidiary bodies, especially in relation with the need to further promote coordination of outputs and the production of integrated scientific and technical advice.

16. The Committee is also invited to provide guidance on pending issues highlighted above, as well as on complementary suggestions emanating from the CMSC.