



**GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION
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COMMISSION GÉNÉRALE DES PÊCHES
POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE**



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**GUIDELINES FOR A VMS TECHNICAL COOPERATION
PROGRAMME IN THE GFCM AREA
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(Draft)

The member states of the GFCM have reached agreement to cooperate in establishing a data-gathering and data-sharing network to cover all fisheries activity of the GFCM's area of competence. The legal authority to operate such a network is well established under international law (Cf. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement, and FAO compliance agreement including the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries). The following guidelines express the fundamental principles underlying the implementation and operation of the network

1. GFCM member states recognize, both individually and collectively, their responsibility for the protection and sustainable exploitation of the marine resources in the GFCM zone of competence.
2. Given that eight of the GFCM member states are also member states of the European Union, and that a further three GFCM member states are EU candidate countries, and that the EU already operates one of the most extensive fisheries cooperation programmes in the world, all technical choices and parameters in the implementation of the GFCM network will be subject to compatibility with parallel choices and parameters already established by the EU.
3. In the case where GFCM would choose to integrate technical choices and parameters that have not yet been envisaged by the EU, consultation between the GFCM and the EU would be established with a view to avoiding future divergence.
4. All GFCM member states will establish a national fishing vessel monitoring system (VMS) based upon satellite communications and navigation and conforming to the recommendation **GFCM/33/2009/7**, such system to be operational by the end of December, 2012 (N.B. should geopolitical considerations present at the time of this writing prevent a member state from meeting this deadline, it is understood that the deadline will be modified to the earliest feasible date).

5. All VMS positions will be reported, in the first instance, to the fisheries monitoring centre (FMC) of the flag state providing authority for its fishing activity. Should the reported position for a given vessel fall outside the EEZ of the flag state, such position will be relayed immediately to the FMC of the member state responsible for the position or, should that position correspond to a high-seas area, to the GFCM secretariat.
6. Member states will make VMS data available to their own monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) assets, as well as, when appropriate, to the MCS assets of other GFCM member states as a way of detecting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) in the GFCM area of competence.
7. GFCM will establish a commission-wide vessel database for its zone of competence containing to include a file for each of the vessels licensed to fish and a report on each confirmed or suspected incident of IUU fishing.
8. In the case where a GFCM member state, in the course of the exercise of its normal VMS and FMC activities, detects what appears to be IUU fishing activity by a vessel operating under a flag other than its own, will inform that flag state of its findings.
9. Direct and unrestricted access to the database will be authorized for designated employees of each of the member states.
10. GFCM member states will explore appropriate means of employing VMS technology, and its variants, to monitor the activities of artisanal vessels.
11. The use of VMS and related technologies in the GFCM will evolve as a function of the evolution of the state of the art.