

Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/5
on fisheries measures for the conservation of the Mediterranean monk seal
(*Monachus monachus*) in the GFCM Competence Area

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

RECALLING that the objectives of the Agreement establishing the GFCM are to promote the development, conservation, rational management and proper utilization of living marine resources;

RECALLING the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development of 2002 and particularly its Plan of Implementation;

RECALLING the Declaration of the Ministerial Conference for Sustainable Development of the Fisheries in the Mediterranean held in Venice in 2003;

REAFFIRMING the principles of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and recalling the precautionary and ecosystem approach to fishery management;

CONSIDERING that the Mediterranean Monk Seal is listed under Annex II on endangered and threatened species of the SPA/BD Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), and that a regional management plan has been implemented by RAC/SPA;

RECOGNIZING that some fishing operations carried out in the GFCM Competence Area can adversely affect Mediterranean monk seals (hereafter referred to as monk seal) and there is a need to implement measures to mitigate these adverse effects;

AIMING to reduce the incidental taking of monk seals in certain fisheries;

TAKING into account the SAC advice on the need to endorse measures for the reduction of the bycatch of monk seals;

ADOPTS, in conformity with the provision of Article III paragraph 1 (b) and (h) and Article V of the GFCM Agreement, that:

1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties of GFCM (CPCs) shall ensure the implementation of fisheries management measures that strongly mitigate the risk of incidental taking of monk seals during fishing operations.

2. Fishing vessels of CPCs shall be prohibited to take on board, tranship and land monk seals in the GFCM Competence Area of unless otherwise required to rescue and to secure assistance for the recovery of harmed individual animals and provided that the competent national authorities concerned have been duly and officially informed in advance.
3. Specimens of monk seals accidentally taken in fishing gears shall be released unharmed and alive. Should it be already dead, the carcass will be landed and national authorities notified at the latest upon arrival at port.
4. Any event of incidental taking and release shall be recorded by the vessel-owner/master in the logbook (or any other equivalent document developed by a Contracting Party to this specific end) and reported to the respective national authorities for notification to GFCM Secretariat.
5. CPCs shall adopt, not later than 2015, fisheries management measures based on scientific studies under their responsibility and designed, whenever appropriate, in line with SAC scientific advice guidance, in order to have very low and close to 0 risk of monk seals incidental taking and mortality in fishing activities/operations.
6. CPCs shall provide, to the best extent possible, to GFCM Secretariat, the related map and geographical positions identifying the location of already known, past and current, monk seal caves with information on fishing fleets using bottom-set nets registered in the ports close to the caves locations within a maximum range of 20 miles. The preliminary maps and lists of geographical positions shall be established for the first time by December 2011 and notified to GFCM not later than 31 January 2012.
7. With a view to ensure that the information provided by the Contracting Parties on maps and geographic positions of monk seal caves is not detrimental to the monk seal survival, such information is transmitted to GFCM Secretariat and treated in a restricted manner in line with the provisions of Resolution GFCM/35/2011/2. The GFCM Secretariat shall ensure that this information is only available to carry out scientific and conservation work as required by the GFCM or by the Contracting Party providing the original data.
8. Technical and scientific information on measures adopted under paragraph 5 must be notified to GFCM Secretariat within the annual national reporting to SAC.
9. SAC, in close cooperation with scientific bodies including committees of other multilateral organizations partners of GFCM, shall provide, not later than February 2012, a protocol and a sampling design to carry out, whenever appropriate, new studies as referred to in paragraph 5, as well as to set a work programme with a view to evaluate the soundness of measures taken and, if the case, to advice on additional measures including the socio-economic impact.

10. As appropriate, the CPCs should, individually and collectively, engage in capacity building efforts and other research cooperative activities to improve knowledge on monk seals and to support the effective implementation of this recommendation, including entering into cooperative arrangements with other appropriate international bodies and promote participatory programmes with relevant stakeholders.