



GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR
THE MEDITERRANEAN



SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)
Sub-Committee on Marine Environment and Ecosystems (SCMEE)
Sub-Committee on Stock Assessment (SCSA)
Sub-Committee on Economic and Social Sciences (SCESS)

First transversal expert meeting on the status of
Elasmobranches in the Mediterranean and Black Sea
Sfax, Tunisia, 20-22 September 2010



Participation

17 participants from Algeria, France, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. Scientists, GFCM and RAC/SPA representatives. 16 contributions

Terms of Reference

- To undertake an **inventory** (taxonomy, distribution and critical habitats) of elasmobranches as well as on the **status** of these species in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.
- Review available data and information on **biology and fishing activities** catching elasmobranches, in particular those of conservation concern
- Identify **appropriate methodologies and approaches to assess** the stocks of selected commercial species and required action for the following years
- Suggest appropriate **mitigation methods** for bycatch reduction

Conclusions (I)

- WS has provided new insights and valuable information. There is still a **remarkable lack of knowledge on biology** and, in particular, on those species considered endangered by the IUCN Red List
- The use of **GFCM Task 1 and MEDLEM** should be encouraged by the countries as appropriate tools to gather the lack of information
- **86 species of elasmobranches** were considered to occur in the region (49 sharks and 37 batoids). However, these species need more systematic revision
- Data on growth are scarce (11 species only) but necessary for stock assessment. **A training course on age reading and growth parameters** of the main elasmobranches species seems to be very urgent to enhance research on this field
- According to various criteria, **7 species have been selected for the first stock assessment meeting and the age readings training course (2011)**: *Prionace glauca*, *Raja clavata*, *Squalus acanthias*, *Squalus blainvillei*, *Rhinobatos cemiculus*, *Rhinobatos rhinobatos* and *Scyliorhinus canicula*
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Conclusions (II)

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- The WS adopted **global and analytical models for stock assessment** methods. Involvement with other RFMOs (ICES, ICCAT) has been proposed
- The importance of **preserving nurseries areas**. Three known critical areas have been put forward by the WS: in the Gulf of Gabès (Tunisia), the Gulf of Boncuk (Turkey) and in the North Tyrrhenian Sea (Italy)
- The **inclusion of species in the amendment of Annexes II and III of the SPA/BD Protocol**, as informed by the RAC/SPA representative, is an important step toward the conservation of elasmobranches in the Mediterranean
- **Simple measures** proved to be worldwide effective **to prevent and reduce bycatch** can be directly applied to the region without delay
- To create a **network of experts** on elasmobranches of the region. Interaction with group of experts in areas elsewhere

Recommendations on research (I)

- Preparation of a draft of **proposal of practical options for mitigating bycatch** (purse seiners, longline and trawlers)
- Launch **pilot studies** on measures to **reduce bycatch** adopting the use of circle hooks and nylon art of the longline fleets in GSA1, GSA2, GSA3, GSA5, GSA14
- Include the **bycatch data on the Task 1** data gathering under the standard GFCM protocol
- Identifying and mapping **critical areas (nurseries)** at the national or regional level
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Recommendations on research (II)

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- Develop **research programs** on systematic, general biology, ecology and population dynamics for species of concern
- Creation of a **network of expert at regional scale** for information exchanges in terms of scientific knowledge as well as for the research of funding sources
- Completing **Synopsis of Sharks** and scheduling the **Batoids of the World** Synopsis (at present in process of edition by FAO publications service), aiming at appropriate Field Identification Guides

Recommendations on management

- The WS proposes applying **fishing area closures of nursery grounds to trawling** operations in GSA9 (North Thyrrenian), GSA14 (Gulf of Gabès) and GSA 22 (Aegean Sea)
- Initiate **fisheries management strategies** for commercially exploited species included in Annex III of the SPA/BD Protocol of the Barcelona Convention
- Developing National Legislation and National Action Plans for **conservation of elasmobranches** (as recommended by IPOA Sharks and UNEP RAC/SPA)

The WS unanimously thanked the **Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (INSTM)** of Tunisia for their hospitality and excellent organization