



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



**Guidelines on a general management framework and presentation of scientific information for
multiannual management plans for sustainable fisheries in the GFCM area**

(as adopted by the Commission at its 36th session in Marrakech, Morocco, on 19 May 2012)

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

RECALLING that the objectives of the Agreement establishing the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean are to promote the development, conservation, rational management and best utilization of living marine resources;

RECALLING the Reykjavik Declaration on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem of 2001;

RECALLING the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development of 2002 and in particular Article 31a in its Plan of Implementation;

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

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

RECALLING the United Nations Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks;

RECALLING Recommendations GFCM/27/2002/1, GFCM/30/2006/1 and Resolution GFCM 33/2009/1 on the management of certain fisheries exploiting demersal and small pelagic;

CONSIDERING the diversity both of the multispecies fisheries and of the life-history traits of exploited stocks in the GFCM Area;

CONSIDERING that fishing mortality must be kept below safe levels to ensure long-term high yields while limiting the risk of stock collapse and guaranteeing stable and viable fisheries;

CONSIDERING the socio-economic importance of fisheries and the need to ensure their sustainability to generate benefit for both current and future generations;

CONSIDERING that certain fisheries management measures need to be revised and adapted to the evolution of both the state of exploited stocks and of the scientific knowledge and that an appropriate method to this end should be established;

CONSIDERING the SAC advice on the need to develop multiannual management plans based on agreed reference points and to evaluate different management scenarios;

AIMING to develop coherent, effective and efficient precautionary management systems in line with the agreed principles of sustainability and able to take actions on the basis of target and safeguard reference points, either model based or empirical, as well as an associated system of decision control rules;

RESOLVES, in conformity with the provision of paragraphs 1 (a), (c), (d), (e) and (h), of Article III of GFCM Agreement that:

PART I

General objectives and definitions

1. GFCM may develop and adopt multi-annual management plans for fisheries exploiting demersal and small pelagic stocks, in particular when shared among GFCM Members, and operating in one or more adjacent GSAs.
2. Such multiannual management plans should be designed to counteract and prevent overfishing while providing high long-term yields and maintaining, to the extent possible, the stocks size of harvested species at levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield and with a low risk of stocks falling outside safe biological limits.
3. Whenever scientifically based and in line with GFCM provisions, they should be coherent with the precautionary and/or ecosystem approaches and minimize the impact of fishing on the sensitive habitats.
4. For this purpose, the SAC will be requested to provide to the GFCM a set of management scenarios for each of the Multiannual management plan to be adopted.
5. Each management scenario may evaluate, as appropriate, different measures including inter alia:
 - fishing gear selectivity, fishing effort regulation, and/or spatio-temporal closures with their timeframe of implementation;
 - the probability and timeframe for the recovery of the stock(s) based on adequate reference points;
 - the socio-economic impacts on fishing activities.
6. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties of the GFCM (hereafter referred to as CPCs), whose vessels carry out fisheries in the GFCM Area, agreed to cooperate with a view to gradually develop and implement, whenever advisable, multi-annual management plans for the fisheries concerned and in accordance with these guidelines.
7. Such guidelines should not affect the possibility for CPCs to develop their own multiannual management plans, provided that objective and measures therein are not less strict or in contradiction with GFCM measures.

Definitions

8. GFCM multiannual management plans may include where relevant the following elements:
 - **reference point**, i.e. conventional value of an indicator, either model based or empirical, which represents a state of the fishery or exploited fish stocks or stocks assemblage, and whose characteristics are considered to be useful for the management of the fisheries with respect, for example, to an acceptable level of biological risk or a desired level of yield. These values may be key fishing mortality rates (F), total mortality rates (Z), exploitation rate (E), biomass levels, catch rates and related fishing effort or other set of empirical indicators that

are related to the maximum potential of a stock or group of stocks and that produce the highest sustainable catches and economic viability of fisheries.

In terms of their use the reference points can be classified as Target, Threshold or Limit reference points.

- **target reference point**, i.e. a management objective based that points to a state of a fishing and/or biological resource which is considered to be desirable. Target reference points should be set sufficiently far away from a limit reference so that the probability that the limits will be exceeded is low. The trajectory toward the target(s) may be represented either on a linear plot with a single target reference point or on a two-dimension plot using two target reference points or on a multidimensional plot when more than two target reference points are used.
- **threshold reference point**, i.e. a precautionary reference point expressed either as fishing mortality rate or a level of biomass or another agreed indicator. They are between the limit and target reference points and used to reduce the probability that the limit reference point will be exceeded. They serve as a red flag and may trigger particular management actions designed to reduce fishing pressure and mortality.
After this point pre-negotiated management measures to reverse the situation should be initiated.
- **limit reference point**, i.e. a conservation reference point expressed either as a fishing mortality rate or level of biomass or another agreed indicator that indicates to a state of a fishery and/or a resource which is considered to be undesirable and which management actions should avoid with high probability.
After this point pre-negotiated management measures to reverse the situation should be initiated

PART II

Specific operational objectives, scientific monitoring and adaptation of the plan

9. The general objectives of a management plan adopted according to these guidelines should be attained on the basis of specific target reference points and, whenever possible and appropriate, on the basis of thresholds and/or limit reference points, to be chosen along with a range of management actions on a case by case basis depending on the available scientific and socio-economic advice by the SAC and within lists proposed by SAC as requested by points 12, 13 and 14 below.

10. The specific objective may be to keep, with high probability, and throughout an accepted range of management actions and associated timeframe for their implementation, the fishing mortality and/or the exploitation rate and/or levels of biomass on the most relevant key stock(s) at levels able to deliver long-term high yields while reducing the risk that stock sizes fall below minimum biological acceptable level in order to avoid undermining their production potentials. The key stock(s) may be chosen taking into account in a proportionate manner either the catch composition and/or the economic value as well as, whenever appropriate, the vulnerability of stock(s).

The specific objective(s) should be chosen on the basis of simulations and evaluation of different management scenarios carried out by the SAC.

11. The SAC is requested to provide a reasoned list of reference points frequently used in fisheries management and in line with the objectives of a multiannual plan as indicated in points 1 and 7 of these guidelines.

12. The threshold reference points should be chosen by the SAC taking into account the uncertainties in the parameters estimations and, whenever scientifically possible, provide values that result in a 5% probability that the limit reference points will be reached.

13. The list of reference points that will be provided by the SAC on the basis of points 11 and 12 is not deemed to be exhaustive and may be revised on the basis of the SAC advice and GFCM deliberations.

Scientific monitoring for the conception, adaptation and revision of the plans on the basis of management scenarios

14. CPCs should ensure adequate annual scientific monitoring of their fisheries and exploited stocks so that SAC is in a position to provide scientific advice, based on evaluation of different management scenarios, adequate to set up multiannual management plans for relevant shared stocks and fisheries.

15. The SAC, on the basis of stock assessments analysis and Task I data, should provide each year, whenever possible, or on a longer time scale depending on the investigated stocks, advice on the status of exploited stocks and pressure exerted by fishing activities and monitor the achievement and maintenance of the objective(s) of a management plan so that, whenever the case, required adaptation of the multiannual management plan could be attained.

16. Whenever possible and adequate, SAC is requested to use management procedure simulations to the consideration of Members, taking into account the uncertainties in parameter estimation and in implementation, to assess the probability to achieve the management objective(s) under different management scenarios.

17. Whenever the GFCM, on the basis of advice from SAC, finds that the fishing mortality or the exploitation rate and associated spawning stock biomass levels or other suitable indicator are no longer appropriate to achieve the objective(s) of a multiannual plan, then it should revise the reference levels accordingly.

18. Where SAC advice indicates that the specific targets of the multi-annual plan are not being met the GFCM should decide a revision of management measures to ensure the sustainable exploitations of the stock(s).

**PART III
Science in support of advice for fisheries management**

19. As appropriate, the GFCM and its CPCs should, individually and collectively, engage in capacity building efforts and other research cooperative activities to improve knowledge on fisheries and exploited stocks and to support the effective implementation of these guidelines including, as adequate, entering into cooperative arrangements with other appropriate international frameworks.

20. With a view to support the SAC in the formulation of adequate scientific advice for multiannual management plans, Members and cooperating non-Members endeavour to:

- i. improve the communication between Members and Cooperating non-Members, the GFCM and the SAC by enabling a constant and regular dialogue;
- ii. improve the implementation of data collection and provision to the SAC;
- iii. support research programmes and projects supporting the work of the SAC;
- iv. facilitate participation in working groups and SAC meetings of scientists from all Members and Cooperating non-Members, as well as other relevant scientific bodies;
- v. contribute to the training of scientific researchers, including young scientists;
- vi. strengthen peer review mechanisms within the SAC by ensuring, inter alia, the wide participation of scientists and explore the possibility to publish its main scientific findings in the scientific peer-reviewed literature.