



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



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**Guidelines for a technical cooperation programme in the monitoring of fishing vessels in the GFCM area of competence<sup>1</sup>**

1. GFCM Members recognize, both individually and collectively, their responsibility for the protection and sustainable exploitation of the living marine resources in the GFCM Area of competence. Furthermore, they recognize GFCM as the competent organization to coordinate and to manage the exploitation of living marine resources in that zone as a whole.
2. GFCM will harmonize its operations with other regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) around the world and particularly with those that neighbour and overlap with its area of competence, as well as with its Members. This harmonization will also include the data formats and protocols used to exchange data between competent authorities and will incorporate such data procedures as are currently practiced in the countries of Europe, Northern Africa and Asia that define the Mediterranean and Black Sea basin. All technical choices and parameters in the implementation of the GFCM platform will consider parallel choices and parameters already established in the region.
3. In the case where GFCM would choose to integrate technical choices and parameters that have not yet been envisaged by the region, consultation between the GFCM and its Members would be established with a view to maintaining compatibility.
4. All GFCM Members will establish a satellite-based national fishing vessel monitoring system (VMS) 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 from meeting this deadline, it is understood that the deadline will be modified to the earliest feasible date and in the interim the member state will make use of the GFCM central fishing monitoring centre (FMC) when operational, see point 6 below).
5. It is of paramount importance, that GFCM Members pay due attention to the full development and implementation of their national fishing vessel register systems which will constitute the basis for their VMS system. National register data must also be fed into the GFCM Vessel Records (Resolution GFCM/35/2011/1) so that the GFCM FMC can rely on up-to-date data. The GFCM and its Members are encouraged to take this opportunity to upgrade their national and regional registers so as to be in line with international initiatives to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing (which is one of the main reasons for a VMS system to be in place).

<sup>1</sup> This is an abridged version of the Guidelines. The original document is available for download at: [http://151.1.154.86/GfcmWebSite/CoC/2013/VMS/Guidelines\\_VMS\\_GFCM-area\\_May2012.pdf](http://151.1.154.86/GfcmWebSite/CoC/2013/VMS/Guidelines_VMS_GFCM-area_May2012.pdf)

6. In order to assure consistent data gathering and sharing over the entire GFCM area of competence, the GFCM Secretariat will establish a central VMS that will serve a multi-faceted role. A key function will be to serve as a central repository and source for all GFCM vessel data. In addition, this regional FMC could provide data services to GFCM Members that do not yet have the advantage of their own FMC. In this case, vessels registered in those countries, and carrying compatible equipment, would report directly to the GFCM FMC. The GFCM, in turn, would provide the fisheries authorities of those States with real-time access to the data.
7. The reporting procedure for the GFCM area of competence will require that all VMS positions be reported, in the first instance, to the FMC of its flag State authority. Should any received position fall outside territorial waters or waters under national jurisdiction of the reporting vessel's flag State, such position will be relayed immediately to the FMC of the GFCM Secretariat. GFCM Secretariat will be responsible for forwarding the data to any third party authorized to receive it.
8. Members will determine the most suitable approach for monitoring their small-scale and artisanal fisheries. This exercise will take into account variables such as required data sets and desired reporting frequency. In addition it will address the question of required vessel reporting equipment based upon criteria such as power supply, geographical coverage, required initial investment and operating costs. Issues such as the use of terrestrial communications systems, like VHF radio, wireless networks, cellular telephony and data transfer in port, will be given attention in due time.
9. Members will make VMS data available to their own monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) assets as well as, where appropriate, to the MCS assets of other GFCM Members as a way of detecting IUU in the GFCM area of competence.
10. GFCM will establish a commission-wide vessel database for its area of competence including a file for each of the vessels licensed to fish and a report on each confirmed or suspected incident of IUU fishing. This will be done in accordance with the provisions of Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/8 and recommendation GFCM/2008/1.
11. In the case where a GFCM Member, in the course of the exercise of its normal VMS and MCS activities, detects what appears to be IUU fishing activity by a vessel operating under a flag other than its own, it will inform the flag State concerned and the GFCM Secretariat of its findings.
12. The data collected by the GFCM will be included in a single database: vessel records (paragraph 5), VMS data (paragraph 6), IUU incidents (paragraph 10). Direct and unrestricted access to the database will be authorized for designated officers of each of the Members according to the GFCM data confidentiality policy and procedures.
13. The application of VMS and related technologies in the GFCM will evolve as a function of the evolution of the state of the art.