

GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

Report of the thirty-seventh session

Split, Croatia, 13–19 May 2013

The thirty-seventh session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), including the fourth session of the Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF) and the seventh session of the Compliance Committee (CoC), was attended by representatives from 21 Contracting Parties, one non-GFCM Member country, and 11 observers. The Commission reviewed the intersessional activities of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) as well as the outcomes of the Task Force established to modernize the GFCM legal and institutional framework. Among the measures adopted this year by the Commission, a recommendation on a multiannual management plan and on transitional conservation measures for fisheries of small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea has set actions aimed at minimizing the threat of overfishing and stock decline and encouraging the sustainable exploitation of these important target species while maintaining stable yields. In the Black Sea area, the Commission adopted a recommendation on the establishment of minimum standards for bottom-set gillnet fisheries for turbot and conservation of cetaceans, in order to guarantee the protection of juvenile turbot until they reach the reproductive size therefore contributing to the renewal of this population in the Black Sea. This measure also foresees standards for turbot fisheries aimed at reducing by-catch of cetaceans. In addition to these binding recommendations, the Commission approved two resolutions to promote the implementation of marine protected areas (including Fisheries Restricted Areas – FRAs) and to adopt guidelines on the management of fishing capacity according to resource availability in order to strengthen the control and monitoring of fishing effort and fishing capacity. Another outcome of the session was the adoption of guidelines on precautionary conservation measures aimed at minimizing undesirable effects on stocks and improving fisheries economic profitability. In the field of aquaculture, taking into account the key role to be played by this sector towards food security and economic growth and recognizing the need to foster its sustainable development in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the Commission agreed to establish the first multi-stakeholder platform involving all players in the sector. The Commission adopted its 2013 autonomous budget, amounting to US\$1 940 973, along with its programme of work for the intersession, including under the first GFCM Framework Programme for 2013–2018. The creation of five new working groups was agreed: three working groups on methodologies for socio-economic analysis, on small scale/artisanal fisheries and on recreational fisheries under the Subcommittee on Economic and Social Sciences (SCESS), one transversal working group on marine protected areas involving all subcommittees, and a working group for the revision of the GFCM Agreement. This year's session was marked by substantial steps forward to support the reform process launched in 2009 with the aim to modernize the institutional framework and ensure a more efficient functioning of the GFCM. The working group for the revision of the GFCM Agreement will be called to play a substantial role in this reform process, which should lead to enhanced sub-regional cooperation, the set-up of efficient mechanisms to ensure compliance to binding decisions, the establishment of a roadmap to fight illegal fishing, thus leading to improved long-term sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. An extraordinary session, to be held in 2014, will examine the outcomes of this reform process.

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