



<b>GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN</b>
<b>SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>First Session</b>
<b>23-26 March 1999, Rome, Italy,</b>
<b>STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE</b>

## Introduction

As part of its restructuring, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean decided to establish a Scientific Advisory Committee to replace the former Committee on Fisheries Management which had sometimes been criticized for giving advice "tinged" with political considerations.

The Commission wants the Scientific Advisory Committee to be made up of specialists nominated for their expertise and able to formulate recommendations based on purely scientific considerations.

The terms of reference drawn up by the Commission for this Committee meet these objectives. However, a certain number of structural and functional issues still need to be finalized if the Committee is to function smoothly. The purpose of this paper is to introduce the debate on these matters under Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda.

## Committee Terms of Reference

Rule X.2 of the GFCM Agreement defines the terms of reference of the Scientific Advisory Committee as follows:

- a) There shall be established a Scientific Advisory Committee which shall provide scientific, social and economic information, data or advice relating to the work of the Commission.

- b) The Committee shall be open to all members of the Commission. Each Member of the Commission may designate a member of the Committee, and a member may be accompanied by experts.
- c) The Committee may establish working groups to analyse data and to advise the Committee on the state of shared and straddling resources.
- d) The Committee shall provide independent advice on the technical and scientific bases for decisions concerning fisheries conservation and management, including biological, social and economic aspects, and in particular, it shall:
- o assess information provided by members and relevant fisheries organizations or programmes on catches, fishing effort, and other data relevant to the conservation and management of fisheries;
  - o formulate advice to the Commission on the conservation and management of fisheries;
  - o identify cooperative research programmes and coordinate their implementation;
  - o undertake such other functions or responsibilities as may be conferred on it by the Commission.
- e) Members have an obligation to provide information on catches and other data relevant to the functions of the Committee in such a way as to enable the Committee to fulfil its responsibilities under this paragraph.

## **Structure**

At its 23<sup>rd</sup> Session (Rome, July 1998), the Commission agreed that its Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) should provide scientific advice free of political considerations and should therefore be composed of subject-matter specialists.

The Commission considered that the SAC should itself set up any subsidiary bodies it deemed necessary, taking into account the special needs of Mediterranean fisheries. The Commission however felt that it could usefully suggest the creation of three sub-committees dealing respectively with stock assessment (SCSA), fishery statistics (SCFS) and economic and social science (SCES). The latter could in turn establish its own *ad hoc* working groups as appropriate.

In addition to these subject-matter subsidiary bodies, the Commission also thought it worthwhile to propose the establishment of subregional subsidiary bodies, with particular attention being paid to the Eastern Mediterranean.

As regards the sub-committee on stock assessment (SCSA), the Commission defined the role that this should play vis-à-vis the work of the Committee, namely in determining appropriate management units based on the most reliable available data and the specific nature of the Mediterranean subregions.

These guidelines and the consultations that the Secretariat was able to hold with some of its members produced the proposed structure set out in Annex.

The three technical consultations, which would meet at intervals to be determined by the Commission itself on an *ad hoc* basis, would be charged with evaluating the status of fisheries with all its biological, economic, statistical and social implications, identifying deficiencies and recommending remedial actions. This would help set the respective agenda for each meeting of the three subject-matter consultations. In this way, the three subcommittees, which would have the final say in recommending to the SAC the convening of subject-matter consultations, would be given a periodic insight into the concerns of the fisheries administrations in GFCM member countries. This procedure should in no way undermine the scientific neutrality of the subcommittees and of the SAC itself.

## **Membership**

Rule X.2b of the GFCM Agreement provides for only one SAC member per country, but allows an unlimited number of subject-matter advisors. The Chairperson of the Commission or the Committee could be empowered to set a maximum number for each meeting in accordance with its provisional agenda. This would facilitate decision making.

## **Level of representation at subsidiary bodies meetings**

### Committee

All the discussions at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission recognized the need to appoint leading specialists to attend the SAC meetings. The representatives could differ according to the main item on the agenda. The idea would be for each contracting party to designate, for example, three specialists covering the three subcommittee subject-areas (one biologist/specialist in stock assessment, one socio-economist and one statistician) who could take it in turn to represent the respective contracting party at the SAC meetings. The other two experts could be included in the delegation as advisers, as only one representative per member is admitted but the principle of attendance of advisers is permitted.

### Sub-committees

In the case of the sub-committees, however, these three experts would naturally act as representative at the meetings of the sub-committees that related to their respective specializations.

#### Ad hoc working groups

The experts taking part in the meetings of the proposed *ad hoc* working groups should be well-established researchers with wide experience in fisheries management and extensive activity in their specialist area.

#### Sub-regional technical consultations

The technical consultations on stock assessment would group representatives of the fishery administrations and would serve as a linkage between research and administration. This would enable the fisheries administrators to voice their needs in terms of studies, information and scientific advice, and would brief the the scientists on the requirements of the policy makers.

### **Functions of the Committee**

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the GFCM decided that the SAC would meet once a year, one month before the session of the Commission. It would be up to each session of the Committee to decide the mandate and dates of the meetings of its sub-committees and *ad hoc* working groups.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission also decided that the SAC conclusions would be adopted by consensus and that its working languages would be the four official languages of the GFCM: Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

The SAC will not always be able to carry out itself the work required under its terms of reference, for example assessment of stocks, socio-economic studies, follow-up to cooperative studies and analysis of information and statistical data, whatever the expertise of its members and however dedicated these may be. It will sometimes have to call in consultants who will act on its behalf and in a personal capacity, and who will be commissioned to provide technical and/or scientific answers to problems identified by the Committee. The specialized regional bodies and the working groups specifically convened for this purpose could provide invaluable support to the activities of the Committee.

For example, GFCM and ICCAT cooperation on large pelagic stocks has proved most useful. Similar cooperation could be envisaged with the ICSEM for the management of small pelagics and with the UNEP/MAP for matters related to the marine environment.

Such an approach would be in keeping with the scenarios proposed by the Secretariat at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the GFCM (GFCM SAC/99.1/inf 3) and accepted in substance by the Commission.

### **Data bases**

If it is to deliver, the SAC and its subsidiary bodies will need reliable data bases that embrace all aspects of fisheries in the Mediterranean. Some are available, others are in the pipeline but still others need perhaps to be envisaged. These data bases will need to be completed and regularly updated if the restructured Commission is to function properly.

At its second session (Rome, March 1998), the Working Party on Fisheries Economics and Statistics evaluated the statistical systems used in the member countries and observed that the main problem which seemed to remain was the proper selection of the information really useful for the management of fisheries at the proper geographical scale. A possible solution would be to "establish simple methodological approaches for the selection and use of common economic and social indicators to contribute effectively to responsible fisheries management".

The Working Party also reviewed the information systems employed in the Mediterranean region and put forward a number of ideas to improve their quality and ensure that these were used by all member countries. A summary of discussions is given in the working group report (GFCM: SAC.1/99/inf.5).

### **SAC programme of work during the intersessional period**

It is not possible at this stage to present a realistic programme of work which will depend on the decisions taken by the SAC with regard to creating subsidiary bodies or not, the frequency of meetings of these bodies and their respective terms of reference. A programme of work could however be formulated by the Secretariat either at the end of this session, in the light of discussions on Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda, or at the forthcoming session of the Committee expected in May/June this year.

### **Action by the Committee**

The Committee's terms of reference have been drawn up by the Commission and should not present any problem. They are only mentioned as a reminder. However, the Committee might wish to clarify certain aspects and scopes of these terms.

This paper proposes that the geographically-based technical consultations that answer directly to the Commission be maintained. They are mentioned by way of information and for advisory feedback only from the Committee.

The Committee is invited to take note of the Secretariat's proposal to limit the number of SAC participants according to the items on the agenda of each session and to take a decision on this matter.

A number of ideas are put forward regarding the level of representation at the meetings of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. The Committee is also invited to determine the measures that are needed to ensure that the SAC can function as effectively as possible.

When deciding on the creation of subsidiary bodies at sub-committee and *ad hoc* working group level, the Committee might also like to suggest how the activities of these bodies could be financed and how often they should meet.

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