

GFCM High Level meeting 9 July 2021

ACCOBAMS Secretariat Statement

The ACCOBAMS Secretariat is grateful for the invitation to participate at the High Level Meeting and for the opportunity given to contribute to the fruitful discussions organised in the run up to the launching of your new Strategy for Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture.

We congratulate GFCM for the work achieved and look forward to contributing as necessary to the implementation of the five targets that you have identified and are now reflected in the GFCM 2030 Strategy.

We congratulate GFCM for the achievements of the mid-term strategy 2017-2020, and are grateful for a close collaboration we believe was extremely fruitful, mainly regarding target 4 of the previous strategy - sustainable fisheries presuppose the preservation of vulnerable species - and also target 5 - on strengthening cooperation with relevant stakeholders.

ACCOBAMS aims at achieving a favourable conservation status for cetaceans in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, and the conservation of cetaceans can only be achieved by assessing the interactions of cetaceans with human activities, including fisheries, and reducing their adverse impacts. It is why institutional collaboration with competent organizations is key to the ACCOBAMS own Strategy for 2014-2025, in which the GFCM is seen as a major partner.

GFCM and ACCOBAMS had the opportunity to jointly promote projects of common interest since 2015, thanks to the support of MAVA Foundation. Assessing and mitigating interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities addressed both depredation and incidental catches, whilst improving our knowledge about such complex occurrences.

Nonetheless, we still look forward to reinforce the data knowledge on incidental catches of cetaceans in the Mediterranean, which is of utmost importance so to enable consideration of proper conservation actions. In the Black Sea incidental catches of harbour porpoises remain critical and it is our hope that the new GFCM 2030 Strategy will contribute to revert the current worrying situation.

ACCOBAMS reaffirms its engagement to firmly collaborate with GFCM in any way possible, particularly regarding the goals and proposed actions under the new Target 1.3 - fishing selectivity, deterring depredation and decreasing mortality of accidentally caught vulnerable species – and the new Target 2.4 – on reinforcing coordination aimed at addressing illegal practices considering that prohibited fishing gear still continue to catch vulnerable species - and cetaceans in particular - and jeopardize cetacean conservation status.

New strategies require new ambitions and GFCM can definitely count on our collaborative efforts to meet the challenges of sustainable conservation of the marine resources of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, for the benefit of the marine resources and ecosystems.

9 July 2021

Susana Salvador, Executive Secretary