



Rome, 8th of July 2021

WWF Statement on the GFCM 2030 “Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea”

WWF welcomes the new GFCM strategy (and its targets) for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea for the period 2021-2030 and commends the improvements made to make the strategy more focused and responding to the needs of the region.

Conservation only works when it benefits both communities and biodiversity. All of WWF conservation work in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea is shaped around the approach that promotes an active participation of fishers, coastal communities, scientists, national administration, the European Commission, MEDAC and GFCM to the management of stocks. We believe that lasting solutions to issues like overfishing, mismanagement, data deficiency, IUU fishing, bycatch, habitat loss, is a shared goal that should drive our joint efforts. Lasting solutions also imply strengthening synergies between fisheries and biodiversity, in particular through the designation of new Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures. This will be essential to reach the target of protecting 30 percent of the Mediterranean Sea by 2030.

In 2020, data showed that increased management efforts and stricter measures can help rebuild fish stocks. We recorded the first positive signals of stocks rebuilding, yet the exploitation rates are still too high.

More efforts are needed to increase the number of management plans, including for small scale fisheries; monitoring must be strengthened so that management measures can be fully implemented; discards and bycatch must be minimized; a stronger culture of compliance needs to be endorsed and embraced. Overcapacity and the use of subsidies must be urgently addressed. It is most necessary to achieve a balance between fish stock availability and fleet capacity. The impact of recreational fishing on fishery resources must be assessed, monitored, and managed. There is an urgent need to address the impacts caused by climate change and pollution.

The GFCM 2030 Strategy will federate all these needed efforts to deliver on national, regional and global commitments, working in synergy with partners. Further, on a global scale, the GFCM 2030 Strategy is expected to contribute to delivering against the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to improve ocean health, end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030.

WWF is fully committed to supporting the implementation of the activities identified under each target within the GFCM 2030 Strategy, in particular through strengthening and leveraging its action in the field with fishers and all relevant stakeholders. We will continue to build partnerships and provide financial and technical support to all actors including the GFCM countries.