



**GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN**

**COMMISSION GÉNÉRALE DES PÊCHES POUR
LA MÉDITERRANÉE**



Via delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153, Rome, Italy. Tel : +39 0657055730. www.gfcm.org

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**GFCM's response to UN - Capacity building in ocean affairs
& the law of the sea including marine science**

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Introduction

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean¹ (GFCM), an intergovernmental organization established in 1949 under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution, has a mandate to promote the development, rational management, responsible utilization and conservation of living marine resources, together with the responsible development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the connecting waters.

GFCM operates through its Secretariat and a number of subsidiary bodies, including the following Committees:

- Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ): established in 1995 and supported by four Working groups
- Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC): established in 1997 and supported by four Sub-Committees and their respective Working Groups.
- Compliance Committee (COC): established in 2006
- Administrative and Finance Committee: established in 2009

I. Conservation and management of stocks

Based on the results of the scientific and technical activities of its subsidiary bodies, GFCM adopts binding decisions on fisheries management and the protection of the Mediterranean marine ecosystem. Recent (2006-2009) decisions include notably the following:

- The reduction of fishing effort on certain demersal and small pelagic fisheries. This type of decision was taken in accordance with the strategy of the Commission to monitor fisheries through a fishing effort control regime considered as the most appropriate management system for the Region.

¹ www.gfcm.org

- The protection of 3 deep-sea sensitive habitats where fishing with towed dredges and bottom trawl nets is prohibited, namely: a) Deep Sea fisheries restricted area “Lophelia reef off Capo Santa Maria di Leuca”; b) Deep Sea fisheries restricted area “The Nile delta area cold hydrocarbon seeps”; c) Deep Sea fisheries restricted area “The Eratosthemes Seamount”.
- The establishment of a Fisheries Restricted Area (FRA) in the Gulf of Lions to protect spawning aggregations and deep sea sensitive habitats
- The adoption of a 40 mm square mesh as a minimum size for the codend of demersal trawlers;
- The prohibition of fishing at depths below 1000 meters;
- The adoption of a multi-annual recovery plan for Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (endorsement of ICCAT Recommendations).

In the last few years, the GFCM has focussed on strengthening the MCS system in the Region. In particular, the Venice Ministerial Declaration on sustainable fisheries in the Mediterranean of 2003 and the GFCM Control and Enforcement Scheme (2005), both provide regional guidelines on: Flag State duties, obligations of Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, compliance and enforcement (including High Seas inspection), port inspections and observer programmes. The GFCM followed up by adopting a Regional Scheme on Port State measures and a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS). These initiatives will likely lead to the development of procedures for High Seas boarding and inspection in the future. A GFCM record of vessels over 15m authorised to fish in the GFCM Convention area is also maintained (see <http://www.gfcm.org/gfcm/topic/17103>).

A Regional Fishing Vessel Register, including all sizes of fishing vessels, will be operational by 2011. The possibility of introducing a Regional logbook is also being addressed by the GFCM.

II. Mechanisms for international Cooperation and non members

GFCM cooperates closely with a number of international entities dealing with the protection of the marine environment and living marine resources namely:

- *United Nations Environment Programme Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (UNEP-MAP RAC/SPA)*: scientific basis for removing or mitigating impacts on protected/threatened species such as banning fishing activities in some sensitive habitats and establishing Marine Protected Areas;

- *Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS)*: on all issues related to cetaceans-fisheries interactions, and specially mitigating effect of fishing activities on by catch/incidental catches of mammals;

- *World Conservation Union (IUCN)*: on all relevant scientific aspects of fisheries, aquaculture, fisheries reserves and fish species red-listing. Fruitful cooperation is also being strengthened in areas of sustainable aquaculture;

- *GEF*: GFCM Secretariat is executing, along with FAO, within the framework of component 3 of the project "Conservation of biological diversity: Implementation of SAP BIO and related NAPs", subcomponent 3.2: "Promote the sustainable use of fisheries resources in the Mediterranean through ecosystem-based management approaches";

- *International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)*: joint monitoring of tuna and tuna like species of the Mediterranean through the Joint GFCM/ICCAT Working group on large pelagic species as well as on data exchange and MCS issues through the endorsement by GFCM of relevant ICCAT management measures.

- *International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM/IAMZ)*: joint training courses on fisheries and aquaculture

GFCM is also closely cooperating with fishing sector Organisations such as the Mediterranean Association of Fisheries Organizations (MEDISAMAK) and the, International Angling Confederation (CIPS) both Observers of the Commission.

IV. Developing states and non-parties

GFCM is responding regularly to the requests emanating from its concerned members notably to strengthen the capacities of national research institutions in the field of data collection, stock assessment and fisheries management. In this respect, technical support is given to the countries especially through the FAO sub-regional projects implemented in the Mediterranean.