



Rome, 28 November 2017

TO THE ATTENTION OF MR MIGUEL DE SERPA SOARES
United Nations Under-Secretary General for Legal Affairs
and United Nations Legal Counsel

Dear Mr de Serpa Soares,

I have the pleasure of responding to your request dated 9 October 2017 inviting our organization, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), to submit a contribution outlining our views on the topic of "Anthropogenic underwater noise" as relevant to the 19th ICP meeting.

In this regard, I would like to focus in particular of the following topics, as mentioned in your letter: *"actions and activities, including research activities, that have been undertaken at the national, regional and global levels with regard to anthropogenic underwater noise, in particular those undertaken to address its adverse impacts"* and *"any suggestions for further action to address the adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise"*.

As for the first topic, I am pleased to report that the GFCM Secretariat has recently participated - as an observer - in a regional workshop on *"Mitigating the impact of underwater noise on marine biodiversity with specific focus on seismic surveys in the southeastern European waters in the Mediterranean Sea"*, organized by OceanCare, NRDC and DBU in Split, Croatia (22-23 November 2017). This workshop provided a unique opportunity to delve into issues relating to the reported effects of anthropogenic noise on marine living resources as well as an overview of the potential impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise in the Mediterranean region. The expert presentations that were given by select experts during the workshop explained how and where cetaceans, in particular, are affected to sound exposure throughout the Mediterranean region. There was a focus in particular on seismic surveys and sound generated therefrom which, reportedly, could have negative effects on Mediterranean fish stocks too. The GFCM presented its recently adopted spatial based measures, including fishing restricted areas, which should be taken into account in view of oil prospection and exploitation activities consistent with a precautionary approach. However, as it was noted that the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries of the GFCM is still to address the issue of anthropogenic underwater noise - with particular regard to its reported impacts on commercial fish stocks -, the workshop encouraged national scientists of GFCM Contracting Parties to bring scientific information to the attention of this committee at its future meetings.

When it comes to suggestions for further action to address the adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on the other hand, I would like to inform you that the GFCM is organizing the *"Forum on Fisheries Science in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea"* on 11-14 December 2018 at the FAO HQ (Rome, Italy). This forum will have an interdisciplinary focus, addressing three interrelated themes, with the aim to highlight leading research based, among others, on contributions received through a call for abstracts. The three themes are *"Better Science for Better Advice"*, *"Healthy Seas & Sustainable Fisheries"* and *"Economic Analysis & Societal Benefit"*. The second theme is particularly relevant in relation to anthropogenic underwater noise as it will provide an opportunity to address relevant environmental issues that call for mitigation measures. It is in fact expected that anthropogenic

underwater noise will be among those issues addressed against the background of this theme. The results stemming from the forum are expected to inform the scientific community, policy makers and IGO/NGO representatives while ensuring capacity and synergies to meet the region's challenges and fostering a science-policy interface. Further details on the forum can be found at the following link: <http://www.fao.org/gfcm/fishforum2018/en/>.

The GFCM does look forward to the upcoming discussions on anthropogenic underwater noise at the next ICP meeting and to any guidance that will be provided by the UNGA to the international community at large.

Sincerely,



Abdellah Srour
Executive Secretary
General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean

To: Mr Miguel de Serpa Soares
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USA