



1.12.2023

## MISSION REPORT

following the delegation of the Committee on Fisheries to the 46th session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), Split, Croatia, 6–8 November 2023

Committee on Fisheries

Members of the mission:

Caroline Roose

(Verts/ALE)

Ladislav Ilčić

(ECR)

## ***Introduction***

The 46<sup>th</sup> session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was held in Split, Croatia, from 6 to 8 November 2023. The session was chaired by Mr. Roland Kristo, GFCM Chairperson, and attended by delegates from 20 contracting parties, 3 cooperating non-contracting parties, representatives of 12 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and the GFCM Secretariat.



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



General Fisheries  
Commission for  
the Mediterranean

GFCM logo

This was the second time that a delegation of the European Parliament attended a GFCM annual session after last year's meeting in Tirana, Albania. Mr Ladislav ILČIĆ (ECR), and Ms Caroline ROOSE (Verts/ALE) joined as observers the delegation of the European Union. The mission programme included, next to the participation to the plenary session, bilateral meetings with GFCM Executive Secretary Miguel Bernal, EFCA, environmental NGOs, and the European Commission.

The GFCM unanimously adopted a total of 34 common measures. In addition, the EU will support the implementation of the GFCM's 2030 measures and strategy with an annual grant of €8 million. The most noteworthy decisions agreed by the GFCM Commission concerned the creation of a system of sanctions to combat overfishing and illegal fishing in the Mediterranean, which will allow to take measures against countries which engage in overfishing or illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Two binding recommendations adopted by the GFCM plenary will allow to “implement appropriate corrective measures to deter non-compliance”. According to the newly adopted text, the GFCM Secretariat will carry out a compliance assessment scheme for each CPC concerned, which should include the evaluation of the level of severity of each individual case of non-compliance, taking into account the mitigating or aggravating

circumstances.

Also, new catch documentation systems for red coral in the Mediterranean and for turbot in the Black Sea will help identify the origin of fishery products, ensuring better conservation of these emblematic species.



Works during the plenary session of the GFCM Commission

## Meetings

### ***Debriefings with the European Commission***

As it is customary during meetings of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, the Head of the EU delegation, Ms. Valerie Lainé, DG MARE Head of Unit for Fisheries Management Mediterranean & Black Sea held two debriefings with the Members of the European Parliament giving account of the state of the ongoing discussions.

Mrs Lainé highlighted the politicization underlying GFCM negotiations, caused mainly by the increasingly conflictual geopolitical context in the Mediterranean and in the Black Sea (Ukraine war, Gaza crisis).



Debriefing with the European Commission. Ladislav Ilčić, Caroline Roose and their respective Policy advisors

### ***Meeting with EFCA, Neil Ansell, Head of Sector Mediterranean Sea and International Waters of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)***

Members welcomed a meeting with the European Fisheries Control Agency to discuss control issues specifically related to the Mediterranean, notably how to ensure a level playing field in the Mediterranean between EU and third country fishing fleets.

As the most debated decisions in GFCM concerned compliance, EFCA's role is bound to become more relevant in monitoring and detecting infractions. With regard to Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS), only EU vessels of 15 m and above are under the obligation of VMS reporting. It is therefore more difficult to locate vessels from third countries. EFCA recognises that a regional VMS scheme would facilitate targeted inspections and save money. Meanwhile measures regarding sighting are helpful. EFCA follows up on every potential non-compliance report and communicates it to GFCM.

### ***Meeting with environmental NGOs***

Members also held a meeting with representatives of environmental stakeholders' organisations, represented by Marco Costantini, Regional Manager on Fisheries WWF



Mediterranean Marine Initiative, Domitilla Senni, Director of Medreact, Vanya Vulperhorst, OCEANA Policy advisor, and Johannes Müller from Oceancare.

NGOs had called for an increased transparency and an effective tackling of non-compliance cases and IUU fishing.

Members also attended the screening of a documentary on the “Jabuka-Pomo” Fisheries Restricted Area in the Adriatic Sea, which detailed the progress in terms of stock recovery and underlined the acceptance by the fishers’ communities since the establishment of the FRA.



Q&A following the screening of the documentary

## ***Meeting with Miguel Bernal, GFCM Executive Secretary***

In their meeting with GFCM Executive Secretary Miguel Bernal, Members reiterated the interest of the Committee on Fisheries. They addressed issues such as Fishing Restricted Areas, management plans for small pelagics and new aquaculture techniques.

The GFCM Secretary General mentioned the upcoming report on Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries (*expected on 7 December*) and pointed out to future key events such as the new ministerial declaration on fishing in the Mediterranean, a follow up to the “MedFish4Ever” declaration of 2017.



*From the left: Ladislav Ilčić, Caroline Roose, Miguel Bernal*

## **SUMMARY OF GFCM DECISIONS:**

The GFCM adopted 34 measures, 28 of which had been presented by the European Union, for the management and control of fisheries, aquaculture and the protection of sensitive habitats in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

Among the main measures, it was agreed to launch new tools to keep track of the activities of all fleets fishing in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas and sharing the various multiannual management plans (MAPs). The new mechanism will follow up on cases of non-compliance through appropriate and proportionate measures. To consolidate joint efforts in the Mediterranean and make sure the measures deliver on the ground, a European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) patrol vessel will be deployed permanently still this year.

Adopted resolutions on compliance aim to reinforce the level playing field in control and management of fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas. This is an important step in ensuring that all operators involved in fisheries follow the same standards, based on the principles of the Common Fisheries Policy.

The EU will support the implementation of the measures and the GFCM 2030 Strategy

with an annual grant of €8 million. New catch documentation schemes for red coral in the Mediterranean and for turbot in the Black Sea will help to identify the origin of fish products, ensuring better conservation of these iconic species.

Furthermore the GFCM will be the first regional fisheries management organisation to establish a permanent working group and to adopt a roadmap for the decarbonisation of fishing activities. This working group will identify actions to promote a more resilient sector against energy crises, a reduction of the carbon footprint and studies to assess the impact of the fishing gear on the seabed.

A new multiannual management plan (MAP) for common dolphinfish in the Mediterranean Sea was adopted based on a joint EU-Tunisia proposal, the main players in this fishery.

Following a proposal from the EU, the GFCM adopted a strategy to protect vulnerable species and launched an Observatory for non-indigenous species. CPCs agreed on a phased implementation of 4 subregional pilot studies towards evaluating the impacts of the potential extension of the limits of the current bottom trawling ban from 1 000 m to 800 m in the Mediterranean Sea on the fisheries concerned.

Despite opposition from Egypt GFCM also consolidated the existing measures under the multiannual management plan for European eel. Long-term measures will be determined next year, based on the results of a regional research programme. With regard to compliance, the issue of eel conservation lead to intense discussions, with Egypt denouncing the impracticability of the EU proposed recommendation for a long-term management plan for European eel due to the inclusion of freshwaters and transitional brackish waters, such as lagoons and estuaries, within the scope of this recommendation. In line with measures adopted in previous years, GFCM decided to reinforce the fisheries restricted area (FRA) in the Gulf of Lion by protecting spawning aggregations and deep-sea sensitive habitats. EU, Morocco and Algeria agreed to implement a FRA in the Cabliers Coral Mound in the Alboran Sea.

## **Full list of adopted GFCM Recommendations and Resolutions**

1. EU proposal for a recommendation on the revision of the minimum conservation reference size for blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea (geographical subareas 1 to 3), amending Recommendation GFCM/45/2022/3
2. Joint EU-Morocco-Algeria proposal for a resolution on a roadmap for the implementation of a FRA in the Cabliers coral mound in the Alboran Sea towards the adoption of adequate protection and management measures, amending Resolution GFCM/45/2022/4
3. EU proposal for a recommendation on the establishment of a fisheries restricted area in the Gulf of Lion (geographical subarea 7) to protect spawning aggregations and deep-sea sensitive habitats, repealing Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/5
4. Joint EU Morocco-Algeria proposal for a recommendation establishing a multiannual management plan for the sustainable exploitation of common dolphinfish in the Mediterranean Sea, repealing Rec. GFCM/30/2006/2, GFCM/43/2019/1 and GFCM/44/2021/11
5. EU proposal for a recommendation on the definition of a minimum conservation reference size for giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16)
6. EU proposal for a recommendation on the definition of a minimum conservation reference size for giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Ionian Sea (geographical subareas 19 to 21)
7. EU proposal for a recommendation on the definition of a minimum conservation reference size for giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Levant Sea (geographical subareas 24 to 27)
8. EU proposal for a recommendation on the extension of the transitional fishing regime and the establishment of catch limits in 2024 for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subareas 17 and 18) in 2024 stemming from Rec GFCM/44/2021/20
9. EU proposal for a recommendation on the implementation of a fishing effort regime in 2024 for key demersal stocks in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subareas 17 and 18), stemming from Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/5
10. EU proposal for a resolution on the extension of measures for the mitigation of fisheries impacts for the conservation of sturgeons in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29), amending Resolution GFCM/44/2021/5
11. EU proposal for a recommendation on the extension of the regional research programme for rapa whelk fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29), amending Recommendations GFCM/45/2022/10 and GFCM/42/2028/9
12. EU proposal for a recommendation on the extension of management measures for sustainable piked dogfish fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29), amending Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/10
13. EU proposal for a recommendation on the extension of management measures for the sustainable exploitation of European sprat in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29), amending Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/9
14. EU proposal for a recommendation on the extension of the multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29), amending



15. EU proposal for a recommendation on a long-term management plan for European eel in the Mediterranean Sea, repealing Recommendations GFCM/45/2022/1 and GFCM/42/2018/1
16. EU proposal for a resolution on the launch of pilot projects for the revision of the deep-water fisheries restricted area in the Mediterranean Sea towards the adoption of adequate protection and management measures
17. EU proposal for a recommendation on the establishment of a regional fishing capacity management plan
18. EU proposal for a recommendation on a management plan for the sustainable exploitation of red coral in the Mediterranean Sea, amending Recommendations GFCM/45/2022/2 and GFCM/43/2019/4
19. EU proposal for a recommendation on an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme for common dolphinfish fisheries outside waters under national jurisdiction in the Mediterranean Sea
20. EU proposal for a recommendation on an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside waters under national jurisdiction in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subareas 17 and 18)
21. EU proposal for a recommendation on the establishment of a catch documentation scheme for red coral in the Mediterranean Sea
22. EU proposal for a recommendation on the establishment of a catch documentation scheme for turbot in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29)
23. EU proposal for a recommendation on vessel sightings, amending Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/21
24. EU proposal for a recommendation on a GFCM schedule addressing compliance issues and corresponding actions, repealing Resolutions GFCM/44/2021/13 and GFCM/43/2019/5
25. EU proposal for a recommendation clarifying the application of compliance recommendations and establishing a compliance and capacity inventory to support the work of the Compliance Committee
26. EU proposal for a recommendation on the establishment of a list of vessels presumed to have carried out illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, amending Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/19
27. EU proposal for a resolution on a roadmap towards increased decarbonization of fishing activities in the Mediterranean Sea
28. EU proposal for a resolution on the restriction and prohibition of the use of driftnets in the Mediterranean Sea
29. Proposal of Egypt for a resolution on the implementation of environmental monitoring programmes for aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea
30. Proposal of Morocco for a recommendation on the mitigation of bottlenose dolphin depredation in small pelagic fisheries in the southern Alboran Sea (geographical subarea 3)

31. Proposal of Morocco for a resolution on a regional plan of action to monitor and mitigate interactions between fisheries and vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea
32. Proposal of Tunisia for a resolution on climate-resilient aquaculture
33. Proposal of Tunisia for a resolution on decarbonization and sustainable feed production in aquaculture
34. Proposal of Tunisia for a resolution on the reduction of plastic use and best management of waste in aquaculture

**The full list of adopted decisions will be published in the repository on the GFCM website:**

**<https://www.fao.org/gfcm/decisions/en/>**



The EU delegation.

from the left: Pinelopi Belekou, Policy Officer, European Commission (EC), Anita Gulam Political Advisor of the European Parliament (EP), Larissa Buru Policy Officer DG MARE (EC), Chato Osio Fisheries Policy Officer (EC), Maria Teresa Spedicato Scientist Fondazione COISPA, Ladislav Ilčić Member of the European Parliament, Valerie Lainé, Head of EU Delegation (EC), Caroline Roose, Member of the European Parliament, Antoine Bigot Policy Officer (EC), Neil Ansell, Senior Officer European Fisheries Control Agency, Björn Stockhausen Political Advisor (EP)

# PROGRAMME

## **Mission of the Committee on Fisheries to the 46<sup>th</sup> session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), Split, Croatia 6–8 November 2023**

### **Monday 6 November 2023**

**Travel Day      ARRIVAL in Split (Split-Kaštela) Airport**

Individual transfer from Split airport to the city centre

Accommodation and conference venue:

LE MERIDIEN, Grljevačka, 2a, Podstrana, Split, Croatia, 21312, [website](#)

**14:00**      Accreditation at dedicated meeting point of the GFCM secretariat

Conference agenda

**14:30 - 17:00      Management of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture**

- Fisheries management and conservation advice
  - Advice emanating from the SAC and in the context of the WGBS
  - New proposals for GFCM decisions
- Advice on aquaculture development
  - Advice emanating from the CAQ
  - New proposals for GFCM decisions
- Advice on compliance issues
  - Advice emanating from the CoC
  - New proposals for GFCM decision

**17:00-18:00**      Debriefing by the European Commission, room tbc  
(tbc)

*Individual dinner arrangements*

## **Tuesday, 7 November 2023**

- 8:00-9:00** Breakfast meeting with Miguel BERNAL, GFCM Executive Secretary (tbc)
- 9:00 - 12:00** *Conference agenda*  
**Management of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture (cont')**
- 12:00 - 14:00** *Lunch break*
- 14:00 - 17:00** **Management of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture (cont')**
- 17:00 - 18:00** Debriefing by the European Commission, room tbc
- 18:00 tbc** Meeting with Neil Ansell, European Fisheries Control Agency, EFCA, Unit Coastguard and International Programmes, tbc

*Individual dinner arrangements*

## **Wednesday, 8 November 2023**

- 8:00 - 9:00** Breakfast meeting with environmental NGOs
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- 9:00 - 12:00** **Management of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture (cont')**
- 12:00** **END of MISSION**
- Individual transfer to Split airport

# **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**Mission of the Committee on Fisheries**  
**Forty-sixth session of the General Fisheries Commission for the**  
**Mediterranean (GFCM)**  
**Split, Croatia**  
**6–8 November 2023**

## **MEMBERS**

1. Caroline ROOSE (Verts/ALE)
2. Ladislav ILČIĆ (ECR)

**(2)**

## **POLITICAL GROUPS**

1. Björn STOCKHAUSEN (Verts/ALE)
2. Anita GULAM (ECR)

**(2)**

## **SECRETARIAT**

1. Fillipo SEGATO

**(1)**

**Total (5)**