



SUMMARY OF THE VARIOUS ACTIONS AND MEASURES BY GFCM FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (MARCH 2022)

1. GFCM Agreement

- The ecosystem approach to fisheries is an important aspect in the GFCM's management approach as reflected in **Article 8(b)(iii) of the GFCM Agreement** (FAO 2016) according to which the GFCM shall formulate and recommend
 - “to adopt multiannual management plans applied in the totality of the relevant subregions based on an **ecosystem approach to fisheries** to guarantee the maintenance of stocks above levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield, and consistent with actions already taken at the national level;”
- Additionally, the central GFCM fisheries management subsidiary body features the ecosystem approach to fisheries in its **mandate** to direct its work (FAO 2016). In particular, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries shall *inter alia*
 - “Provide independent advice on a technical and scientific basis to facilitate the adoption of recommendations concerning the sustainable management of fisheries and ecosystems at the regional and subregional levels, including on relevant biological, environmental, social and economic aspects, as well as on issues associated with the **ecosystem approach to fisheries**, the impact of IUU fishing on populations and ecosystems, and the assessment of biological and ecological implications under different management scenarios;”

2. GFCM instruments

- There are **no less than forty-five GFCM instruments** (Recommendations, Resolutions, and Decisions) that are explicitly referring to the ecosystem approach to fisheries management adopted over the years. A big number of these instruments relate to management plans or otherwise management measures of certain species across different sub-regions within the GFCM area of application. Most recent examples of such instruments are:
 - Concerning multiannual management plans:
 - **Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/4** on a management plan for the sustainable exploitation of blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea, which extends for one year the current transitional measures adopted by Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/2
 - **Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/20** on a multiannual management plan for the sustainable exploitation of small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea, lays down the grounds for a comprehensive long-term adaptive management plan, after an initial transitional period with additional precautionary measures.
 - Concerning management measures:
 - **Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/7** on management measures for sustainable trawl fisheries targeting giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Strait of Sicily, which foresees continuing a minimum set of precautionary measures and pursuing work within the dedicated GFCM working group to inform the adoption of long-term management measures in 2022;
 - **Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/9** on management measures for the sustainable exploitation of sprat in the Black Sea, which foresees in particular the



- establishment of a working group to examine and analyse possible climatic effects on European sprat in the Black Sea as well as an assessment of the biological, economic and social implications of implementing alternative management measures;
- **Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/10** on management measures for sustainable piked dogfish fisheries in the Black Sea, which aims to prepare the ground for a future multiannual management plan, in particular by filling information gaps through the implementation of a dedicated research programme.
 - Concerning mitigation measures:
 - **Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/13** on the mitigation of fisheries impacts for the conservation of seabirds in the Mediterranean Sea, which seeks to develop mechanisms ensuring that additional data are collected on the incidental catch of seabirds in fishing activities and establishes measures to improve the conservation status of seabirds and minimize, mitigate and, where possible, eliminate the unwanted interactions between fishing operations and seabirds.
 - **Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/14** on the mitigation of fisheries impacts for the conservation of sea turtles, which seeks to encourage further actions to improve the conservation status of sea turtle species and measures to mitigate or eliminate the risk of incidental catch of sea turtles in fishing operations and/or the associated mortality;
 - **Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/15** on the mitigation of fisheries impacts for the conservation of cetaceans, which seeks to encourage further actions to improve the conservation status of cetacean species and make every effort to support global and regional actions to investigate on the most appropriate measures to mitigate bycatch and depredation and implement them, as necessary, in close collaboration with the fishing communities and other relevant stakeholders;
 - **Resolution GFCM/44/2021/5** on mitigation of fisheries impacts for the conservation of sturgeons in the Black Sea, which foresees, within the BlackSea4Fish project, the implementation of a pilot project to address critical issues related to the marine part of the sturgeon lifecycle by compiling, assessing and evaluating all available data and information.
 - **Resolution GFCM/44/2021/10** on flag state performance, which aims at the production of self-assessments in accordance with the performance assessment criteria set in the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance, whose objective is to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.
 - **Examples of other non-management plan instruments** that pay special attention to the ecosystem approach to fisheries management are:
 - **Resolution GFCM/37/2013/1** on area-based management of fisheries, including through the establishment of fisheries restricted areas in the GFCM area of application and coordination with UNEP-MAP initiatives on the establishment of specially protected areas of Mediterranean importance. In accordance with that Resolution, the designation of FRAs for the conservation and management of fisheries resources within an **ecosystem approach to fisheries management**, including in cases where their location may totally or partially coincide with that of SPAMIs, should be done by the GFCM, in particular for areas in the high seas.
 - **Resolution GFCM/37/2013/2** on guidelines on the management of fishing capacity in the GFCM area of application. One of the management principles, focusing on complementarity, coherence and consistency requires that CPCs should work to ensure that efforts to address the management of fishing capacity are complementary, coherent



and consistent with current activities, actions and international commitments, including the **ecosystem approach to fisheries**.

- **Additionally**, the GFCM, or some of its CPCs separately, have adopted political documents emphasising the role of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management. Such documents are:
 - The **2016 Bucharest Declaration** towards enhanced cooperation on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture, in particular the technical outputs of the expert meetings (Panel 1) in its Annex, recommends cooperation with the GFCM towards the promotion of an **ecosystem approach to fisheries management**, which includes the collection of information on fisheries-related issues, such as relevant socio-economic data, discards, incidental catches of vulnerable species, invasive species and other aspects of marine ecosystems;
 - In the **2017 MedFish4Ever Declaration** the signatories attach importance to the establishment of an **ecosystem-based fisheries management** and undertake to take various actions towards the sustainable fisheries management of the Mediterranean;
 - In the **2018 Sofia Declaration**, the signatories attach importance to the establishment of an **ecosystem-based fisheries management** and undertake to take various actions towards the sustainable fisheries management of the Black Sea;
 - On its 44th meeting in November 2021, the GFCM adopted its 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (**GFCM 2030 Strategy**). The GFCM 2030 Strategy recognises that “[c]oncerted efforts are in fact essential to maximize GFCM action and address the social, economic as well as environmental aspects of sustainability in the region, in line with the **ecosystem approach**, and build resilience to respond to global challenges and crises.” In light of this, one of the five targets of the Strategy is called Fisheries and ecosystems: healthy seas and productive fisheries.

3. Upcoming projects

- The GFCM is also in the process of developing two mirror projects that will benefit from co-financing from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which will centre on the ecosystem approach to fisheries.
 - The Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Black Sea - (FishEBM BS) project, which adopts an ecosystem approach to fisheries to tackle the barriers to sustainable management of Black sea fisheries (i.e. overfishing, IUU fishing and destructive fishing practices and climate change, marine pollution and non-indigenous species) with a focus on promoting blue economy opportunities.
 - The Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean - (FishEBM MED) project, which also adopts an ecosystem approach to fisheries to tackle the barriers to sustainable management of Mediterranean fisheries (i.e. overfishing, IUU fishing and destructive fishing practices and climate change, biodiversity loss and marine pollution, including marine litter, and non-indigenous species) with a focus on promoting blue economy.

4. MAIN REFERENCES



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



**General Fisheries Commission
for the Mediterranean
Commission générale des pêches
pour la Méditerranée**

FAO. 2016. Basic texts of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean of the FAO. Rome. (also available at <https://www.fao.org/3/i5450e/i5450e.pdf>).

FAO. 2021. GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Rome. (also available at <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7562en/cb7562en.pdf>)