

Recommendation GFCM/30/2006/3
on the establishment of fisheries restricted areas to protect deep-sea sensitive habitats

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

RECALLING that the objective of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of marine living resources in the GFCM area of application;

RECALLING the 2003 Declaration of the Ministerial Conference on the Sustainable Development of Fisheries in the Mediterranean (2003 Venice Declaration);

RECALLING Resolution 59/25 of the United Nations General Assembly and in particular paragraphs 66 and 67 calling upon the regional fisheries management organizations to adopt appropriate conservation and management measures in order to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/29/2005/1 on the management of certain fisheries exploiting demersal and deep-water species;

CONSIDERING that the integration of environmental concerns in fisheries management is a way to protect the structure and functioning of marine ecosystems which are in turn fundamental to the overall production of the seas, including the exploited resources, and to the benefit of sustainable fisheries;

CONSIDERING that also human activities other than fisheries should care for the structure and functioning of the marine ecosystems to the benefit of healthy environment and sustainable fisheries;

NOTING that the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) recommends to ban bottom trawling activity in the deep-water coral reefs located in international waters (referred to as Lophelia reef off Capo Santa Maria di Leuca) in order to protect coral;

NOTING that the SAC has indicated that the area referred to as “the Nile Delta area cold hydrocarbon seeps” is characterized by an exceptional concentration of cold hydrocarbon seeps which have favoured the development of a unique living community and recommends that the area should be given a full protection status by avoiding demersal fishing practices;

NOTING that the SAC recommends to ban trawling activities in the area referred to as “the Eratosthenes Seamount” located in the eastern Mediterranean between the Levantine platform to the south and the Cyprus margin to the north, near the subduction zone of the African plate, in order to protect the deep-sea sensitive habitats;

ADOPTS, in conformity with Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, the following recommendation:

1. Fishing with towed dredges and bottom trawl nets shall be prohibited in the areas bounded by lines joining the following coordinates:

a) Deep-sea fisheries restricted area “Lophelia reef off Capo Santa Maria di Leuca”

39° 27.72' N, 18° 10.74' E

39° 27.80' N, 18° 26.68' E

39° 11.16' N, 18° 04.28' E

39° 11.16' N, 18° 32.58' E

b) Deep-Sea fisheries restricted area “the Nile delta area cold hydrocarbon seeps”

31° 30.00' N, 33° 10.00' E

31° 30.00' N, 34° 00.00' E

32° 00.00' N, 34° 00.00' E

32° 00.00' N, 33° 10.00' E

c) Deep-sea fisheries restricted area “the Eratosthenes Seamount”

33° 00.00' N, 32° 00.00' E

33° 00.00' N, 33° 00.00' E

34° 00.00' N, 33° 00.00' E

34° 00.00' N, 32° 00.00' E

2. For the same areas, CPCs shall call the attention of the relevant authorities in order to protect these areas from the impact of any other activity jeopardizing the conservation of the features that characterize these particular habitats.