

## **Resolution GFCM/43/2019/2**

### **on enhancing the conservation of cetaceans in the GFCM area of application**

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 2002 Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and in particular its Plan of Implementation;

*REAFFIRMING* the principles of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and recalling the precautionary and ecosystem approaches to fisheries management;

*CONSIDERING* that the incidental catch of cetacean species in relation to fishing activities may seriously affect cetacean populations in the GFCM area of application;

*RECOGNIZING* that some fishing operations carried out in the GFCM area of application, as well as the risk of unaccounted catch of cetaceans due to the loss of gear at sea (so-called “ghost fishing”), can adversely affect cetaceans and that there is a need to better understand the phenomenon in order to conceive and implement measures to mitigate such adverse effects;

*RECALLING* the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) whose objectives include the mitigation of negative impacts between cetaceans and fishing activities;

*RECALLING* the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol) of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and the listing of several cetacean species occurring in the convention area therein;

*RECALLING* Recommendation GFCM/22/1997/1 on the limitation of the use of driftnets in the Mediterranean and Recommendation GFCM/36/2020/2 on the mitigation of incidental catches of cetaceans in the GFCM area of application;

*RECALLING* the mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, in particular its Target 4 “Minimize and mitigate unwanted interactions between fisheries and marine ecosystems and environment” and the development of actions related to output 4.2 “Healthier marine ecosystems and more productive fisheries”;

*RECALLING* that the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration commits signatories, in the context of establishing an ecosystem-based fisheries management framework, to ensure adequate protection of vulnerable species and sensitive habitats;

*CONSIDERING* the memorandum of understanding between the GFCM and the United Nations Environment Programme – Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP-MAP) which aims for a closer strategic and operational cooperation among regional sea conventions, including for the mitigation of impacts from fisheries on marine habitats and species;

*AIMING* to reduce the bycatch of cetaceans in the GFCM area of application, thus contributing to improve the conservation status of these animals, in line with an ecosystem approach to fisheries management;

*TAKING INTO ACCOUNT* the advice of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) on the need to endorse measures for the reduction of the bycatch of cetaceans;

*RECOGNIZING*, also, the need to collect more data and technical information in order to fully assess the advantages and risks associated with the possible adoption of other types of measures modifying the characteristics of fishing gear, as well as any other potential impact on fishing activities;

*RECALLING* Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/2 on the mitigation of incidental catches of cetaceans in the GFCM area of application;

*RECALLING* Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/2 on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom-set gillnet fisheries exploiting turbot and for the conservation of cetaceans in the Black Sea;

*ADOPTS*, in conformity with Articles 5 and 8 of the GFCM Agreement, the following resolution:

1. Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) should encourage further actions to improve the conservation status of cetacean species.
2. CPCs should enhance data reporting information on incidental catch rates of cetaceans in line with the technical manual of the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF).
3. CPCs are invited to take the necessary steps to implement existing legislation and mitigation measures to eliminate incidental catch of cetaceans during fishing operations.
4. The SAC is requested to compile, assess and evaluate all available data, information and actions reported under Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/2, under the DCRF and any other source of additional information including scientific literature, surveys at sea, research projects etc.
5. The twenty-third session of SAC should report to the GFCM on the progress accomplished thereon, the identified gaps in knowledge, and provide the necessary elements for setting future measures with the objective of conserving cetacean species populations in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.
6. At its forty-fifth session, upon receipt of advice from the SAC, the GFCM may consider, if appropriate, the adoption of further measures allowing for the achievement of the objectives of this resolution.
7. The provisions of this resolution are without prejudice to additional or stricter measures adopted or that could be adopted by CPCs.