

Resolution GFCM/43/2019/3
on the implementation of a vessel monitoring system and an electronic logbook 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;

CONSIDERING the high level of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities in the GFCM area of application and the need for adequate monitoring of catches;

CONSIDERING Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7 concerning minimum standards for the establishment of a vessel monitoring system in the GFCM area of application;

CONSIDERING Resolution GFCM/38/2014/1 on guidelines on vessel monitoring system and related control systems in the GFCM area of application;

RECALLING the provisions of Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7 on a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM logbook, amending Recommendation GFCM/34/2010/1;

CONSIDERING the commitments of the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration and of the 2018 Sofia Ministerial Declaration on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture;

RECOGNIZING that the operationalization of a centralized vessel monitoring system (VMS) and control systems, including information deriving from this system, supports enhanced assessment of fisheries stocks, identification of fishing grounds and fishing activities, thus contributing to the achievement of the mid-term strategy established by Resolution GFCM/40/2016/2 for a mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries;

CONSIDERING that the technology to ensure the electronic reporting of catches (“electronic logbook”) has reached an adequate level of development to be operationalized, as demonstrated in various other regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) around the world;

NOTING the conclusions of the thirteenth session of the Compliance Committee (CoC);

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

PART I

Implementation of VMS in the GFCM area of application

1. The objective of this resolution is to provide GFCM with options for the establishment of a VMS in the GFCM area of application so that VMS and automated identification system (AIS) data could be used in support of monitoring and control of fisheries activities.

2. In 2020, on the basis of the results of voluntary pilot projects, the Working Group on VMS (WGVMS) should provide the CoC with recommendations including technical options for establishing such VMS.
3. The WGVMS should establish the terms of reference for pilot projects taking into consideration different types of centralised and regionalised VMS as currently deployed in other RFMOs.
4. The WGVMS should submit its recommendations to the fifteenth session of the CoC.
5. The WGVMS may also consider providing recommendations for other satellite VMS such as AIS in order to effectively monitor fishing activities in the GFCM area of application.
6. Based on the conclusions of the CoC, the forty-fifth session of the GFCM should consider adopting a recommendation in view of the implementation of a centralised/regionalised VMS and associated requirements in the GFCM area of application.
7. Access to centralised/regionalised VMS should comply with regulations and principles related to property and sovereignty.
8. Any development of a VMS for the GFCM should be without prejudice to and consistent with the existing CPCs' regulations on VMS. Any access to VMS data will be established in accordance with confidentiality rules in place.
9. The terms of reference for the WGVMS are provided in Annex 1 of this resolution.
10. This resolution repeals Resolution GFCM/38/2014/1 on guidelines on vessel monitoring system and related control systems in the GFCM area of application.

PART II

Implementation of an electronic logbook in the GFCM area of application

11. The WGVMS should provide the CoC with recommendations on strengthening the implementation of an electronic logbook (electronic recording and reporting system [ERS]) with a view to establishing a voluntary pilot project on ERS for certain vessels fishing in the GFCM area of application.
12. The extended terms of reference for the WGVMS are provided in Annex 2 of this resolution.
13. The WGVMS should submit its recommendations and technical specifications to the fourteenth session of the CoC.
14. Based on the conclusions of the CoC, the forty-fourth session of the GFCM should consider adopting a recommendation in view of the implementation of a voluntary pilot project on ERS.
15. Any access to the electronic logbook data should be established in accordance with confidentiality rules in place.

Terms of reference of the WGVMS for the formulation of recommendations, options and technical specifications towards the implementation of VMS in the GFCM area of application

The recommendations, options and technical specifications drafted by the WGVMS should, *inter alia*:

1. Consider the specifications and the state of play of implementation of VMS systems in the GFCM area of application, in particular in relation with the implementation of Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7;
2. Propose concrete and technical improvements to current VMS as considered necessary in view of a centralised VMS, and in particular rules to ensure efficient VMS data.

The WGVMS should:

1. Prepare the terms of reference of two pilot projects aimed at testing the feasibility of the establishment of a centralised/regionalised VMS system in the GFCM area of application, on the basis of existing VMS schemes deployed in other RFMOs;
 - The first pilot project should, in particular, be based on the experience and results of the VMS currently deployed at the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC).
 - The second pilot project should, in particular, be based on the experience and results of the VMS currently deployed at the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).
2. Define limited zones/areas of the GFCM area of application and targeted fleet or fleets to which the pilot projects should apply. Each CPC should identify the vessels belonging to these fleets that will participate in the pilot projects.
3. Establish clear technical options (centralised or regionalised VMS) and a roadmap for the operationalization of a the most suitable VMS for the GFCM as well as related measures;
4. Analyse and present the costs and benefits of the various options, based on the experience of other RFMOs, for the pilot projects, taking into account the specificities of the GFCM area of application and of the fleets, including small-scale fisheries;
5. Define rules and procedures for the operationalization of a VMS in the GFCM of application, having regard to the safety of information storage, the confidentiality and the integrity of data;
6. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities/duties for VMS reporting (by operators, flag states and the GFCM Secretariat);
7. Establish minimum standards and requirements, including to ensure that VMS is operational at all times as well as for data reporting, rates of transmission, rules on data sharing. Such standards should in particular:
 - Ensure that the GFCM Secretariat receives in real time the position of vessels in the GFCM area of application;
 - Ensure that the data received from the fishing vessels of CPCs to which VMS applies are recorded in computer-readable form;

- Ensure that data are automatically transmitted to the fisheries monitoring centre of the flag/port/coastal/inspection contracting party.
8. Ensure compatibility with international standards and data confidentiality requirements for the exchange of VMS information between CPCs and ensure consistency with the existing regulations on VMS of CPCs.

Terms of reference of the WGVMS for the implementation of ERS

The recommendations drafted by the WGVMS should, *inter alia*:

1. Provide a technical definition and specifications for ERS in the GFCM area of application on the basis of an analysis of the state of play of ERS implementation in CPCs and RFMOs;
2. Ensure full compatibility of the technical specifications with international standards and data confidentiality requirements, in line with existing regulations of CPCs;
3. Establish minimum standards and procedures concerning, *inter alia*, the functioning and maintenance of ERS, catch reporting data, landing and transshipment declarations and various phases of fishing activities,
4. Identify which fisheries/fleets in the GFCM area of application would best benefit from pilot activities/testing;
5. Define a clear roadmap and calendar for the deployment of the pilot project based on the above provisions;
6. Provide a cost analysis.