

## Resolution GFCM/44/2021/5

### on the mitigation of fisheries impacts for the conservation of sturgeons in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29)

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;

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

*FURTHER RECALLING* the GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, in particular its Target 1 “Fisheries and ecosystems: healthy seas and productive fisheries” and Output 1.3 “Efficient area-based conservation measures, technical and nature-based solutions strengthened to conserve biodiversity and enhance the productivity of marine living resources”;

*NOTING* that the 2018 Sofia Ministerial Declaration on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture requires, in the context of establishing an ecosystem-based fisheries management framework, to ensure an adequate protection of vulnerable species and sensitive habitats;

*CONSIDERING* that the Red List of Threatened Species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recognizes the impaired conservation status of several Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea sturgeon species (*Acipenseridae*) listing them as critically endangered;

*FURTHER CONSIDERING* that the bycatch of sturgeon species in relation to fishing activities may seriously affect sturgeon populations in the Black Sea;

*RECOGNIZING* that some fishing operations carried out in the Black Sea can adversely affect sturgeon species and that there is a need to better understand the phenomenon in order to develop and implement measures to mitigate such adverse effects;

*FURTHER RECOGNIZING* 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;

*AIMING* at improving the conservation status of sturgeons, in line with the ecosystem approach to fisheries management, by reducing the bycatch of sturgeons in fishing operations, complementary to the conservation measures for these species taken at the national, regional and international level and consistently with the knowledge and experience gathered from the implementation of these measures;

*CONSIDERING* that the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS), at its ninth session (online, July 2021), acknowledged that the critical issues related to the marine part of the sturgeon life-cycle should be addressed through the implementation of a pilot project to be conducted within the BlackSea4Fish project and in collaboration with all relevant partners;

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

1. The measures established by this resolution shall apply to fishing operations carried out in the Black Sea (geographical subarea (GSA) 29) and related to the bycatch of sturgeon species (Acipenseridae), which are classified as critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable by the IUCN.
2. The contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) shall encourage further actions to improve the conservation status of sturgeon species and agree to implement a GFCM pilot project on sturgeons in the Black Sea, to be conducted under the BlackSea4Fish project, as recommended by the WGBS at its ninth session.
3. The CPCs shall contribute to the effective implementation of the GFCM pilot project on sturgeons in the Black Sea and provide all necessary information to the BlackSea4Fish project in this context.
4. The CPCs shall enhance data reporting information on bycatch rates of sturgeons in line with the technical manual of the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF). Particular emphasis should be placed on the reporting of information on the types of fishing gear and methods involved in the bycatch of sturgeons towards ensuring an adequate monitoring and informing a bycatch assessment.
5. The CPCs are invited to communicate to the GFCM Secretariat their national legislation in place as well as relevant information and data on sturgeons, including on the biology, ecology and distribution of the species and on their interactions with fisheries, available from relevant scientific literature, research projects, surveys at sea and monitoring programmes.
6. The CPCs are invited to take the necessary steps to implement existing international, regional and national legislation as well as mitigation measures to minimize and, where possible, eliminate the bycatch of sturgeons during fishing operations.
7. The CPCs shall take appropriate actions to ensure full compliance with existing international, regional and national rules on the conservation of sturgeons by strengthening the monitoring, control and surveillance measures along the supply chain.
8. The CPCs shall ensure the reinforcement of the fight against the illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing of sturgeons in the Black Sea. In view of facilitating the implementation of the pilot project, the CPCs shall report to the GFCM Secretariat any information relevant to IUU fishing towards the qualification and possible quantification of the sources of IUU fishing affecting sturgeons.
9. The WGBS, with the support of the BlackSea4Fish project and via the pilot project, is tasked to compile, assess and evaluate all available data, information and actions reported under the DCRF as well as any other source of additional information including, but not limited to, scientific literature, surveys at sea, research projects and initiatives at the national, regional and international level.
10. The WGBS, at its eleventh session in 2023, shall report to the GFCM on the progress accomplished thereon, the results of the pilot project and the identified gaps in knowledge and provide the necessary elements for setting out future measures, if deemed appropriate, with the objective of conserving sturgeon species populations in the Black Sea by primarily, but not limited to, reducing and mitigating sturgeon bycatch.
11. The GFCM, at its forty-sixth session in 2023, upon receipt of advice from the WGBS, may consider, if appropriate, the adoption of further measures allowing for the achievement of the objectives of this resolution.
12. The provisions contained in this resolution are without prejudice to additional or stricter measures adopted or that may be adopted by CPCs.

