

Recommendation GFCM/45/2022/10 on a regional research programme for rapa whelk fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29), amending Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/9

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

CONSIDERING 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 living marine resources in the area of application;

RECALLING that, in giving effect to the objective of the GFCM Agreement, the GFCM shall adopt recommendations on conservation and management measures aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of fishing activities, in order to preserve marine living resources and the economic and social viability of fisheries and that, in adopting such recommendations, the GFCM shall give particular attention to measures to prevent overfishing and minimize discards, as well as to the potential impacts on small-scale fisheries and local communities;

RECALLING that in giving effect to the objective of the GFCM Agreement, the GFCM shall foster, as appropriate, a subregional approach to fisheries management and aquaculture development in order to better address the specificities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;

CONSIDERING that the GFCM shall adopt management measures based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries to guarantee the maintenance of stocks at levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY);

RECALLING that 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 socioeconomic data, discards, incidental catch of vulnerable species, invasive species and other aspects of marine ecosystems;

RECALLING that the 2018 Sofia Ministerial Declaration on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture calls upon Black Sea riparian countries to enhance multilateral cooperation and implement actions to improve the sustainability of resources, particularly with regard to data collection, scientific evaluation and the implementation of an ecosystem-based fisheries management framework in the Black Sea;

CONSIDERING that the GFCM shall apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks of 4 August 1995 and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

CONSIDERING that the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries provides that states “should apply the precautionary approach widely to conservation, management and exploitation of living aquatic resources in order to protect them and preserve the aquatic environment, taking account of the best scientific evidence available. The absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take measures to conserve target species, associated or dependent species and non-target species and their environment”;

CONSIDERING that the measures formulated by the GFCM shall be based on the best scientific advice available and on the work of the BlackSea4Fish project in supporting the advice delivered by the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS), taking into account relevant environmental, economic and social factors;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea endorsed with Resolution GFCM/44/2021/12, and particularly its Target 1 “Fisheries and ecosystems: healthy seas and productive fisheries”;

CONSIDERING the socioeconomic importance of rapa whelk fisheries in the Black Sea and the need to ensure their long-term economic sustainability;

RECALLING that Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/9 established a regional research programme for rapa whelk fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29)

ACKNOWLEDGING that due to force majeure in 2022, the tenth meeting of the WGBS was postponed to 2023, meaning that up-to-date scientific advice based on the outcomes of the regional research programme is expected in 2023;

CONSIDERING that the regional research programme needs to be extended to 2023, with a view to improving scientific, technical and socioeconomic knowledge of these fisheries and supporting the GFCM in proposing and adopting new appropriate management and control measures, including monitoring of fishing activities and catches;

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

Amendment of Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/9

Paragraph 9 of Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/9 shall be amended and replaced as follows:

The WGBS, at its annual meeting in 2023, shall assess the outcome of the regional research programme established by this recommendation, taking into consideration the national efforts made by CPCs to manage rapa whelk fisheries. The WGBS shall report back to the GFCM, at its forty-sixth session in 2023, and if deemed necessary, present proposals for the adaptation of the measures set by this recommendation and for complementary management and control measures.