



Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC)

Meeting for the preparation of the High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries¹

FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy, 2 March 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The meeting for the preparation of the High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries was held on 2 March 2018 at the FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy. The meeting served as an occasion to prepare the High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, to be held 25-26 September 2018 in Malta. In this regard, a draft Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (RPOA-SSF) was presented and participants exchanged their expert views on its contents. It was agreed that the RPOA-SSF would be reorganized so that the preamble constituted the ministerial declaration to be signed on the occasion of the High-level meeting, while the technical actions put forth through the RPOA-SSF would be annexed to the declaration. A timeline was established for providing further comments on the document, with a view to finalizing the RPOA-SSF by late April / early May and thus allowing adequate time for contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties to coordinate with their relevant ministers to ensure signature during the High-level meeting. Furthermore, the meeting defined practical and organizational aspects of the High-level meeting. Participants discussed the preliminary elements for a draft programme and unanimously agreed that it should include both a day of technical discussions, as well as a day of high-level discussions. It was agreed that 25 September 2018 would be dedicated to stakeholders and showcasing cases of best practice in the region, while 26 September 2018 would be dedicated to the ministers and the official signature ceremony. It was agreed that a template would be produced for the proposal of best practices cases in the region. The GFCM Secretariat was charged with coordinating, together with partner organizations, the logistical and organizational arrangements of the meeting.

OPENING AND ARRANGEMENTS OF THE MEETING

1. The meeting for the preparation of the High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries was held on 2 March 2018 at the FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy. Fifty-three participants were in attendance from GFCM contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs), relevant non-contracting parties and observers, in addition to representatives of the FAO and the GFCM Secretariat. The list of participants is enclosed in Appendix 2.

2. Mr Abdellah Srour, GFCM Executive Secretary, opened the meeting. In his address (reproduced in Appendix 3), he emphasized that the High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries, to be held on 25–26 September 2018 in Malta, was a culmination of the work carried out in recent years and was an opportunity to take concrete action. To this end, he recalled the First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (November 2013, Malta), the Regional Conference on “Building a future for sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean

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and the Black Sea” (March 2016, Algeria), as well as Target 2 of the Mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, and relevant international instruments, such as the MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Reduction (SSF Guidelines) of the FAO².

3. Following his opening address and a round of introductions by participants, the GFCM Executive Secretary introduced the objectives of the meeting, recalling that the preparatory meeting aimed to discuss a common plan of action and create a roadmap for implementing concrete actions for small-scale fisheries (SSF). He explained that the preparatory meeting was open to all relevant stakeholders and all were invited to participate actively and express their views. The agenda was adopted, as included in Appendix 1.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE MEETING

4. Ms Anna Carlson, GFCM Secretariat, provided an overview of key topics in order to provide context for the meeting’s deliberations. A characterization of SSF was presented, providing updated data on fleet, value and employment within the sector. Salient outcomes from recent GFCM activities were also presented, including progress made in piloting monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) solutions for SSF and their role in also promoting safety at sea, traceability and reliable data on fishing effort, as well as preliminary findings of the study on social protection for SSF in the Mediterranean, in which the connection to reinforcing fisheries management measures and decent work was noted. Furthermore, the conclusions of the SSF Symposium (November 2013, Malta) and SSF Regional Conference (March 2016, Algeria) were recalled, together with pertinent aspects of the SSF Guidelines and the MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration.

5. Mr Giuseppe Di Carlo, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), presented together with the GFCM Secretariat, a platform of partner organizations created to formalize regional coordination on SSF in the Mediterranean, tentatively called “Friends of SSF”. This coordination group has the aim of building synergies among the ongoing activities of each organization with respect to SSF. In particular, work being carried out to test a matrix for the characterization of SSF in the Mediterranean was presented.

6. In support of this coordination effort, the GFCM Secretariat also presented an online platform and mapping tool for sharing and building synergies among ongoing work by partner organizations. It was noted that this tool was in a preliminary testing phase and that work was underway to better refine its functionality and expand its application also to the Black Sea. However, the potential of this online tool was highlighted, also with a view to supporting the implementation of eventual outcomes of the High-level meeting.

7. The delegate of the European Union (EU) applauded the progress made and recognized that this progress demonstrated a level of maturity in the actions on SSF in the region. She noted the need to highlight this concrete action during the High-level meeting and, to this end, she invited the involved organizations to officially launch the coordination platform on that occasion.

8. The delegates of Egypt and Algeria, as well as the representative of the Maghreb Platform of Artisanal Fishers, expressed their appreciation for the efforts to consolidate ongoing work into an online mapping tool, recognizing its utility in building synergies. They noted that many other projects existed in the region, including those being carried out by SSF organizations themselves, and that this information should be included within the tool in due time.

9. The participants welcomed the efforts of the GFCM Secretariat with regard to MCS solutions for SSF, including ongoing tests at country level with countries willing to improve the monitoring of SSF. They noted the crucial importance of MCS for the SSF sector, among others, to issues such as safety at sea. In this respect, the delegate of Morocco recalled various programmes within his country,

² <http://www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/guidelines>

including those targeting safety at sea, and noted the importance of involving fishers in the decision-making processes for such programmes.

10. Participants also welcomed progress underway to characterize the SSF sector through the testing of the characterization matrix. In particular, the delegates of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia while recognizing the challenges to defining SSF recalled the importance of moving towards a better characterization.

REGIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND BLACK SEA

11. The delegate of the EU introduced the draft RPOA-SSF. She noted that the present draft was a collective effort that reflected consultations held over the past year, including among the riparian states of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea as well as the fishing sector and relevant NGOs. Furthermore, she underlined that the draft RPOA-SSF reflected the conclusions adopted at the SSF conferences held in the region in recent years, as well as the principles agreed upon within the SSF Guidelines. It was recalled that the RPOA-SSF was intended to present a strategy for implementing specific actions for SSF.

12. After a first reading of the RPOA-SSF, the representative of the Mediterranean Recovery Action (MedReAct) presented a joint statement, also on behalf of WWF, Oceana, the International Forum for Sustainable Underwater Activities (IFSUA) and the European Anglers Alliance (EAA). In particular she noted their main priority was to promote preferential access for SSF, in line with section 5.7 of the SSF Guidelines, by establishing a trawler exclusion zone of 150 m depth to avoid conflicts between SSF and industrial fisheries. Other priorities included establishing coastal area management plans, ensuring proper MCS for SSF, and enhancing data collection and scientific advice.

13. Each section of the RPOA-SSF was discussed in detail. Specific changes were suggested to the text of the document, a revised version of which is reproduced in Appendix 4. It was agreed that certain paragraphs, for which further study and revision were needed, would be put within square brackets, to be addressed by the EU, looking also to the SSF Guidelines for guidance on language.

14. The delegate of Lebanon, supported by the delegate of Monaco, underlined that the RPOA-SSF was a political tool and, as such, needed to be packaged in a way that would be useful to politicians. To this end, the length of the document and the framing of terminology within the document was deemed crucial.

15. The participants therefore agreed, based on a proposal by the delegate of Monaco, that the current preamble of the document (paragraphs 1 to 32) would constitute the ministerial declaration, whereas the specific actions contained within the RPOA-SSF would be included as a technical annex. It was underlined, however, that the signing of the declaration should constitute adoption of both the preamble and related technical annex.

16. Participants recognized the need to frame the RPOA-SSF within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant multilateral frameworks, including the Paris Agreement. To this end, the delegate of Monaco proposed a new paragraph 14. Furthermore, the delegates of Algeria and Georgia suggested including specific references to blue growth and blue economy.

17. The crucial role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), SSF organizations and other stakeholders in promoting the sustainability of SSF was also highlighted. Participants agreed this should be stressed further through the preamble of the RPOA-SSF.

18. Note was made of the need to update the figures cited within the RPOA-SSF, based on the most recent data presented by the GFCM Secretariat. The delegate of Morocco also proposed including data on fishing capacity, while the delegate of Algeria suggested underlining that these figures were regional averages and variations could occur among subregions.

19. With regard to the topic of capacity-building, discussions took place regarding the promotion of SSF organizations. In particular, the delegate of Lebanon and the representative of MEDAC

cautioned against solely promoting new bodies and institutions to represent the SSF sector, but rather noted the need to ensure existing institutions were strengthened. The GFCM Secretariat echoed this sentiment, while noting the need to fill gaps, where they existed.

20. To this end, the delegate of the EU proposed the creation of a “summer school” for strengthening the network of existing SSF platforms and exchanging best practices among them. It was suggested to add a new paragraph within the section on capacity-building to reflect this proposal.

21. Also with regard to capacity-building, Mr Stefano Lelli, FAO EastMed regional project, noted that there was a need to better develop within the text the need to attract and support young fishers to the sector, as a way of preserving fishing traditions and the cultural heritage they represent.

22. With regard to the topic of decent work, the delegate of the EU noted that efforts were currently underway to better study this topic, citing also the FAO-GFCM study on social protection for SSF in the Mediterranean. In response to the representative of the Maghreb Platform of Artisanal Fishers, who proposed also addressing child labour through the section of the RPOA-SSF on decent work, it was noted that a dedicated conference on issues of social development, employment and decent work related to SSF had been proposed for 2019. Participants therefore agreed that work should continue to gather information on these issues, including child labour, so that they could be adequately addressed during the dedicated conference.

23. The representative of MedReAct, with regard to the implementation of the RPOA-SSF, highlighted the need to introduce clear benchmarks and timetables for implementing the RPOA-SSF, noting the need to distinguish between those actions which were already ongoing, those which required immediate attention and those which needed more time to be implemented.

24. The delegate of the EU supported the need for an implementation timeline and it was agreed that a paragraph would be added to the RPOA-SSF inviting the GFCM Secretariat to propose such a timeline within 2019.

25. Noting that once the RPOA-SSF would be adopted by the High-level meeting, the GFCM Secretariat agreed that it would go to the annual session of the GFCM for adoption and approval of actions, timelines and budget resources for implementation.

ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS FOR THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING

Discussion on the preliminary programme, including format and priority topics

26. Participants discussed the preliminary elements for a draft programme for the High-level meeting and unanimously agreed that it should include both a day of technical discussions and a day of high-level discussions. It was agreed that 25 September 2018 would be dedicated to stakeholders and cases of best practice in the region, while 26 September 2018 would be dedicated to the ministers and the official signing ceremony. Based on the discussions held, a draft programme is reproduced in Appendix 5.

27. The delegate of the EU underlined that this initiative was aimed at SSF professionals, NGOs and others, and therefore it was important to dedicate a day to these stakeholders. Furthermore, in line with the need to ensure that best practice becomes standard practice, she reiterated the importance of showcasing concrete examples of progress made, in line with the RPOA-SSF. It was noted that the EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella, would be in attendance for both days of the meeting.

28. In line with the statement of the delegate of the EU, the delegate of Morocco proposed that the first day be dedicated to presenting success stories from throughout the region, in line with the topics in the RPOA-SSF.

29. The participants agreed that the GFCM Secretariat would produce a template for submitting proposals of cases of best practices, offering each CPC, as well as relevant civil society organizations and other stakeholders, the opportunity to put forth proposals. The GFCM Secretariat invited WWF to lead a steering committee to coordinate the selection of best practice cases to be presented on the first

day, ensuring also a balance of subregional representation. The WWF subsequently accepted this role. The EU delegate asked to be part of the steering committee and also to be included in the list of the “Friends of SSF”.

30. The participants also agreed that the GFCM Secretariat, together with partner organizations, would explore ways of best highlighting these best practice cases, including through the provision of support to produce videos or other media tools. In particular, participants concurred that the role of women in SSF should be highlighted. It was agreed that awards could be given during the high-level event to celebrate select best practice cases.

31. In line with this, the representative of MEDAC stated that they would hold a special session or side event on the role of fishing cooperatives, their organization and participation in the decision-making process. The representative of WWF stated that they would also hold a similar event on co-management in SSF.

32. The delegate of the EU noted that it was important to consider strong communication tools in order to ensure a wide impact of this High-level meeting. To this end, she asked the GFCM Secretariat to foresee a logo for this event. The GFCM Secretariat agreed, requesting CPCs to submit good pictures of SSF that could be used for event materials, noting that copyrights would be protected in line with existing FAO rules. Similarly, it was agreed that the GFCM Secretariat would oversee the creation of an event website, as well as other logistical elements.

Identification of key participants and partner organizations

33. Key participants for the High-level meeting were discussed and it was, again, agreed that the first day would be dedicated to all relevant stakeholders, while the second day would be reserved for high-level delegations. The importance of a strong ministerial presence was underlined.

34. The representative of WWF suggested that invitations for the technical meeting should also be extended to development agencies, with a view to promoting strengthened funding support to SSF.

35. The delegate of Monaco proposed that, in order to guarantee high-level participation, the High-level meeting be announced soon as this would ensure the event is placed on the agendas of relevant ministers.

36. The GFCM Secretariat agreed to circulate a “Save the Date” announcement as soon as possible, which would then be followed by official invitations to be sent from the relevant FAO Directorate. It was underlined that, following official invitations, each CPC should ensure coordination with their own ministers to ensure their presence.

Relevant side events, poster sessions and workshops

37. Participants agreed that stands and posters were an integral component of this event. To this end, a call for posters and stands would be circulated by the GFCM Secretariat.

38. The delegate of the EU suggested that private companies, such as those promoting communication or MCS technology for SSF, could be invited to hold a stand. The delegate of Lebanon proposed that stands also be used to promote SSF organizations and their products, if feasible from an administrative point of view.

39. The delegate of Morocco highlighted the importance of research and scientific data in supporting SSF and, to this end, underlined the importance of having posters to share scientific developments.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

40. The following conclusions and next steps were agreed upon by participants:

Preliminary programme

- a) The High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea will consist of 1) a technical meeting to support discussions on the RPOA-SSF and 2) a High-level

meeting. The technical meeting will aim to highlight cases of best practice in the region, in line with the RPOA-SSF. A preliminary programme is reproduced in Appendix 5.

- b) All relevant stakeholders were invited to submit proposals of cases of best practice, in line with the RPOA-SSF. The template for submission of proposals is reproduced in Appendix 6. Proposals should be sent via e-mail to the GFCM Secretariat (GFCM-Secretariat@fao.org) no later than 15 April 2018.

Invitations

- a) The GFCM Secretariat would circulate a “Save the Date” announcement, with a view to ensuring the High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea is placed on the agendas of relevant ministers.
- b) Upon finalization of the programme, the GFCM Secretariat will coordinate the sending of official invitations via the relevant FAO Directorate.
- c) Each CPC will ensure coordination with their relevant ministries to promote strong high-level representation.

Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea

- a) A revised version of the draft RPOA-SSF, based on the modifications discussed during the preparatory meeting is reproduced in Appendix 4.
- b) Further comments and changes to the revised draft RPOA-SSF should be made in track changes and submitted to the GFCM Secretariat (GFCM-Secretariat@fao.org) by 30 April 2018.
- c) It was agreed that coordination was necessary for the revision of the RPOA-SSF and, to this end, the EU would coordinate the comments and revisions to the revised draft, in close cooperation with the GFCM Secretariat. It was agreed that possible modifications would be inserted in track changes.
- d) A final text of the RPOA-SSF is expected to be circulated by the end of April / early May 2018 to allow each CPC to carry out internal processes with their respective ministries and ensure the signature of the RPOA-SSF on 26 September 2018.
- e) Based on a final text of the RPOA-SSF, the GFCM Secretariat will develop a timetable and benchmarks for its implementation.

Indicative calendar of follow-up actions

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT	
Deadline for submitting comments on the report of the Meeting for the preparation of the High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries, including on the: - Preliminary Programme (Appendix 5) - Template for the proposal of cases of best practice in SSF (Appendix 6)	19 March 2018
INVITATIONS	
Save the Date announcement	19 March 2018
Official invitations and call for side events and posters	Late April 2018
SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS: CASES OF BEST PRACTICE IN SSF	
Template for the submission of proposals of cases of best practice in SSF finalized and circulated to all participants	20 March 2018
Deadline for submitting proposals of cases of best practices in SSF	15 April 2018
REVISION OF THE RPOA-SSF	

Revised RPOA-SSF circulated to all participants, based on discussions from the preparatory meeting	Late March 2018
Deadline for submitting additional comments on the revised RPOA-SSF	30 April 2018
Final RPOA-SSF text available	End April / early May 2018

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

41. The final report of the meeting was endorsed by e-mail on 19 March 2018. Participants of the preparatory meeting expressed gratitude to the GFCM Secretariat for ensuring such a constructive meeting, and thanked the donor, the EU, for having provided the necessary funds under the GFCM Framework Programme.

Agenda

- 1. Opening and arrangements of the meeting**
- 2. General introduction to the meeting**
 - Importance of small-scale fisheries: characteristics of the sector and salient outcomes of GFCM activities
 - Key messages emanating from relevant initiatives and international instruments (such as the FAO SSF Guidelines, the MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration and the Conclusions of the SSF Regional Conference)
 - Open discussion
- 3. Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea**
 - Discussion of a draft ministerial declaration
- 4. Organizational aspects for the High-level meeting**
 - Discussion on the preliminary programme, including format and priority topics
 - Identification of key participants and partner organizations
 - Relevant side events, poster sessions and workshops
- 5. Conclusions and next steps**
- 6. Any other matter**
- 7. Closure of the meeting**

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**Opening address by Mr Abdellah Srour
Executive Secretary of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean**

Distinguished representatives and experts,
FAO and GFCM colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the FAO today and I commend you all for your active involvement in this process to prepare the High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries.

Momentum has been gaining in recent years to draw attention to the need to support small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. From the principles enshrined within the SSF Guidelines of the FAO, to the conclusions of the Regional Conference on small-scale fisheries held in Algeria in 2016, to the objectives put forth through Target 2 of the Mid-term strategy and through the MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration, we have collectively recognized the importance of this sector for supporting livelihoods, food security and cultural heritage in coastal communities.

This September we therefore have an important opportunity to build on this momentum. The High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries, to be held from September 25 to 26 in Malta, offers the occasion to take resolute, calculated and coordinated political action to support the small-scale fishing sector in our region. To ensure that political agreements turn into concrete action, our strong preparation and coordination in advance of this meeting is of the utmost importance.

We recognize our small-scale fishers as “guardians of the sea”: safeguarding local ecological knowledge and cultural heritage. We ask them to do their part: to be conscientious of their role in protecting the marine environment, to adhere to fishing regulations, to contribute to data collection, to provide advice for decision-makers and much more.

Yet we must also do our part to support them, agreeing upon a plan of action that addresses the critical issues for these fisheries: enhancing the role of small-scale fisheries organizations, implementing management plans that are specific to the sector, considering small-scale fisheries within marine spatial planning, promoting access to resources, reinforcing the value chain, promoting decent work, building capacity, enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration and much more. Not only do we need to build political consensus, but we also must be ready to implement these actions in a coordinated and synergistic way.

Today we are tasked with discussing these crucial issues and agreeing upon priority actions. Furthermore, we must also reflect on each of our roles in implementing these actions. Noting that the heterogeneous nature of our region’s small-scale fisheries warrants a holistic and multifaceted response, during our deliberations we must also consider the need to engage all relevant stakeholders in this process, including the fishers themselves, but also including relevant political actors from related ministries such as economic development, environment and tourism. We therefore expect this preparatory meeting to not only make strides in discussing the draft Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries, but also in defining practical and organizational aspects for this meeting.

As this is no easy task we are facing and I want to allow ample time for robust discussions, I won’t keep you any longer. I thank you very much for your attention and I look forward to your active participation in our discussions.

Abdellah Srour,
GFCM Executive Secretary

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION¹
ADOPTING A REGIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN
THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BLACK SEA

Preamble

1. We, Ministers, heads of national delegations and the European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, have met in Malta, on 26 September 2018 to reinforce small-scale fisheries for the coming ten years through the adoption of a Regional Plan of Action in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;
2. This Regional Plan of Action (hereafter the "Plan") aims at establishing the objectives, principles and concrete actions that should be applied for ensuring the long-term environmental, economic and social sustainability of small-scale fisheries;
3. Since millennia, the small-scale fisheries sector supports the livelihood of the coastal communities and local economies. It has a vital importance for food security and provides essential socio-economic value, notably in cases of subsistence economies. In the world, 37 million people are estimated to be directly employed by the small-scale fisheries activities, while 100 million people are estimated to find employment in connected activities;
4. In the Mediterranean and Black Sea, small-scale fisheries constitute over 83% of the fishing fleet and 31% of fishing capacity, employ at least 57% of total on-vessel fishing labour and account for approximately 22% of the total landing value from capture fisheries in the region;
5. Small-scale fishers are firmly rooted in local communities, traditions, cultural heritage and values. Many of them are self-employed and provide fish for direct human consumption within their households or communities. They play a pivotal role in social inclusion and cohesion by maintaining populations in remote/ rural areas;
6. Small-scale fisheries create added-value for local development, social and environmental sustainability, thanks to their abilities to produce short-chain products, to provide consumers with fish of quality and variety, to have in general a relatively low impact on environment and by giving women a significant role through diversification of fishing activities;
7. However, in some countries the sector lacks recognition and representativeness, in particular due to the high number of clusters and scattered fishing activities and due to the presence of other local fisheries industries and maritime economies. Furthermore, there is lack of clear characterization of the sector;
8. As a result, in some cases, small-scale fishers may not be enough involved in the decision-making processes at all levels (*local, regional, national and international bodies*), notably in the participative approaches. Their lack of voice also weakens the weight of small-scale fishers in the market, as well as their possibilities for access to financial assistance, access to waters and fishing opportunities;
9. The sector's capacities are limited in terms of human capital (*ageing fishers, difficulty to attract young people, lack of access to proper education, working conditions, safety rules on board*), investment (*access to credit*) and innovation. As a consequence, the sector has difficulties to meet minimum compliance requirements regarding, in particular, data collection, traceability, monitoring, control and surveillances measures;

¹ Draft version before final comments (deadline for comments 30 April 2018)

10. Many other maritime activities interact with the small-scale fisheries over access to marine space, infrastructure and ports that could lead to marine pollution and altered marine ecosystems which have an impact on small-scale fisheries. The maritime economies particularly affecting Small-Scale Fisheries are, *inter alia*, hydrocarbon extraction, ocean energy projects, recreational fishery, other "métiers", aquaculture, coastal tourism and maritime transport;
11. Nonetheless, there are synergies and positive interactions between small-scale fisheries and other maritime activities, for instance through sharing facilities and suppliers, through the ecological tourism and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPA);
12. Due to their close knowledge of and connection with the marine ecosystems, small-scale fisheries are best placed for observing major environmental and climate changes. Consequently, small-scale fishers are not only resource users but also play a role as "guardians of the sea". In this context, they should therefore play an important role in waste management and recycling and be recognised as actors of the circular economy;
13. This Plan is based on the First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea (November 2013, Malta), the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (2014), the Conclusions of the Regional Conference "Building a future for sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea" (Algiers, 7-9 March 2016), *the Sofia High-level Conference on the Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture (7 June 2018)*, the Bucharest High-level conference towards enhanced cooperation on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture (24-25 October 2016), the Malta Ministerial Conference on the Sustainability of Mediterranean Fisheries "MedFish4Ever" (30 March 2017) and on the GFCM Mid-term strategy (2017-2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries (2016) as well as on the Blue Growth Initiative;
14. The present Plan serves as a response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development "Transforming Our World", adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015, and in particular to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 on food security and nutrition and its target 2.3; to SDG 5 on gender equality and its targets 5.a and 5.b ; to SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth and its target 8.5; to SDG 13 on climate change and to SDG 14 on oceans and marine resources and its target 14.b.

We agree to ensure the long-term environmental, economic and social sustainability of small-scale fisheries on the basis of the following objectives and principles:

15. Recognize the status of the small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea which should take into account their regional specificities, experience, knowledge and contribution to the cultural heritage of local communities;
16. Recognise the socio-economic specificities of the small-scale fisheries, such as the seasonality of their activities and unstable income;
17. Support livelihoods for coastal communities, especially in remote/ rural areas, through sustainable small-scale fisheries;
18. Ensure fishers' responsibility and awareness of the need to reconcile economic and social objectives with environmental objectives;
19. When relevant encourage the creation of bodies/ associations in view of better structuring, organising and representing the sector in all decision-making processes;

20. Improve the capacity to collect relevant data on small-scale fisheries;
21. Provide equitable access to fishery resources for small-scale fisheries by taking into account their socio-economic and cultural role in the local communities;
22. Facilitate access to markets and public services for small-scale fisheries communities;
23. Give adequate attention and financial support for small-scale fisheries without unduly favouring large-scale operators;
24. Ensure proper establishment of control, monitoring and surveillance system for small-scale fisheries;
25. Promote small-scale fisheries access to new technologies and their use aiming to improve their safety, monitoring, control and surveillance;
26. Promote the utilisation of fishing practices that minimize damage to the aquatic environment;
27. Prevent any practice that would contribute to underground economy and the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities (IUU);
28. Avoid policies that contribute to overcapacity that can negatively affect the small-scale fishing communities;
29. Reinforce the value chain of the sector, notably for locally caught fish, in order to maximise the economic benefits of small-scale fisheries;
30. Promote the diversification of the catch and promote quality over quantity that provides an advantage to small-scale fisheries with benefits for consumers, fishers and environment;
31. Support the diversification of activities with the aim of ensuring the sustainable development of the sector and coastal communities;
32. Make efforts so that the MPAs are perceived positively by the fishers and that their establishment does not create competing constraints for fishers;
33. Take due account of small-scale fisheries in maritime spatial planning and in interaction with other sectors, such as recreational fishing, aquaculture, oil drilling, transport and tourism;
34. Encourage the visibility and participation of small-scale fisheries representatives in the national and local decision-making and advisory processes when addressing fishery and other relevant policies, such as environment, transport, tourism and infrastructure;
35. Promote decent work and working conditions throughout the entire value chain for small-scale fisheries;
36. Consider the particular role of women in the economy of small-scale fisheries and coastal communities;
37. Recognise and take into account the impact of natural and human-induced disasters and climate change on the small-scale fisheries;

38. Encourage the regional organizations and institutions, non-governmental organizations and other interested stakeholders to play a significant role in promoting the objectives and principles of the present plan and to continue their contribution to the sustainability of the small-scale fisheries;

- 39. Consequently, we commit to implement the actions foreseen in the Plan by 1 January 2028. To this end, the aforementioned objectives, principles and actions shall be implemented in the National Strategies and /or Plans.**

Signed in Malta, on 26 September 2018, in two originals in English.

REGIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BLACK SEA

The Plan is composed of the following actions:

40. To adopt, as soon as possible, a characterisation of small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, reflecting their socio-economic relevance and specificities on the basis of a set of indicative criteria (*dimension of vessel, gear used, activities of non-vessel based fisheries, etc.*).

A) Scientific research

41. Initiate an integrated regional research in order to collect accurate, valid and complete data on the value and socio-economic impact of small-scale fisheries;

42. Develop scientific studies to strengthen knowledge about the interaction between small-scale fisheries and preservation of marine ecosystems and marine resources;

43. Design implementation of pilot and innovative projects covering all aspects of small-scale fisheries;

44. Consider the assessment of small-scale fisheries within the forecast studies on adaptation to the climate change, including its carbon-binding potential;

B) Small-scale fisheries data

45. Using all appropriate tools, develop information and data collection systems that involve small-scale fisheries in the collection of regional-level data on fleets and fishing activities, including the record of all catches;

46. Establish national fishing fleet registers that record small-scale fishing vessels;

C) Small-scale fisheries management measures

47. Implement, where appropriate, fisheries management plans which establish specific rules designed to ensure, in particular, preferential access for sustainable and low-impact small-scale fisheries along the coastal band;

48. Taking into account management measures and their impact on the resources, facilitate equitable access to marine resources that should be based on sustainable fisheries and their socio-economic role;

49. Support investments for small-scale fisheries to improve selectivity, protect biodiversity, minimise unwanted catches, protect catch from predators or promote energy-efficiency;

50. Guarantee good and fair access to the landing sites that should be adequately equipped to facilitate small-scale fisheries activities (*fully serviced docking areas, moorings*);

51. Promote the reduction of incidental catches by, inter alia, selectivity of gear, training fishers and strengthening rescue and first aid centres;

52. Encourage small-scale fisheries to be fully equipped with efficient communication, navigation and catch preservation on board equipment, according to the flag state requirements;
53. Encourage small-scale fisheries vessels to be easily traced through the use of technologies based on radio frequencies, satellites or internet applications;
54. Promote traceability of gears used by small-scale fishers, such as marking of fishing gears;
55. Promote, where appropriate, participative surveillance of the fishers, in particular in the identification of the IUU fishing practices;
56. Promote the construction of artificial reefs for small-scale fisheries according to the GFCM Practical Guidelines for Artificial Reefs in the Mediterranean and Black Sea and in respect of environment. Using unsuitable materials and dumping of waste shall be strictly avoided;
57. Prepare best practice guidelines to extend and share good experiences at the regional level;

D) Value chain of small-scale fisheries

58. Promote the creation of cooperatives, producers organisations or other collective organisations in order to improve market access and to increase the availability of local food to coastal communities;
59. Establish regional plans for the fisheries producer organisations in order to increase their profitability and improve the quality of their products;
60. Enhance the promotion of direct sales of fresh fish, in accordance with the national legislation;
61. Organise information/ awareness campaigns towards consumers on the importance of responsible consumption of local products, on the short-chains guaranteeing freshness and on the consumption of less-known species, aiming at increased diversity of catches;
62. Promote the creation of fish product labels and certified brands to encourage operators and consumers to buy local. Encouraging the creation of certified brands should promote responsible local and small-scale fishing and make the consumer aware of sustainable fisheries;
63. Ensure traceability of small-scale fisheries products which guarantees that the local products introduced in the market are of good quality and environmentally sustainable.

E) Associating small-scale fisheries to the participative decision making processes

57. Associate small-scale fisheries in the creation and implementation of maritime and local development strategies;
58. Encourage participative management of Marine Protected Areas of small-scale fishers, for example by co-management, ensuring their commitment and compliance with rules, conflict resolution and sustainable management through an integrated management plan;
59. Ensure that maritime spatial planning at the national and regional level takes account small-scale fisheries and that it is represented through the entire process;

60. Promote participative management systems, such as co-management bodies, where fisheries management measures and accompanying socio-economic programmes may be established and implemented;
61. Where necessary, at the national level reinforce the analysis of legislation and institutional mechanisms which ensure the inclusion of small-scale fishers in all activities regarding the sustainable development of the sector;
62. Establish roadmaps / plans that would enable positive synergies between the small-scale fisheries and other closely related marine economies, in particular coastal and ecological tourism, marine bio-technology, Marine Protected Areas and aquaculture;
63. These plans should result in concrete benefits for small-scale fisheries, such as: shared infrastructure, suppliers or workers, multi-purpose activities, supply of fry fish to aquaculture, collection of marine organisms for marine technology, better monitoring and understanding of marine ecosystems for sustainable fishing;
64. Organise supporting structures with the aim to address competing situations that may occur between small-scale fisheries and other interacting sectors;
65. Encourage good cooperation between small-scale fisheries and recreational fishery activities;

F) Capacity building

66. Establish a regional platform to engage and promote dialogue among small-scale fisheries associations in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. This platform is expected to build on and reinforce existing sub-regional and national platforms in order to provide a participatory mechanism for knowledge-sharing, collaboration, stakeholder involvement, and the dissemination of best practices;
67. Reinforce capacity building of small-scale fisheries and give specific priority to the financial assistance. This would enable their participation in the decision-making processes and would ensure a level-playing field, in particular through the following actions:
 - a. Creating and reinforcing technical and financial support (*direct / indirect incentives, bank loan schemes, etc.*);
 - b. Assisting small-scale fishers in accessing to the institutional funds;
 - c. Supporting sustainable development of small-scale fisheries organisations and their networks;
 - d. Ensuring access to consultancy bodies;
 - e. Facilitating education and training opportunities, such as summer universities, aiming at developing fisheries-specific skills, policy knowledge (*fisheries, environmental*) and, in particular, knowledge of innovative solutions and technology developments;
68. In the context of the local communities development, implement regional diversification schemes that help small-scale fishers diversify their activities (for example, leadership training, nautical and ecological tourism, recycling waste found at sea);
69. The above measures shall be applicable to the small-scale fishers and their families. Particular attention shall be given to women and young fishers;
70. Develop a regional programme aiming to provide support and technical assistance, in particular to the developing countries, in order to build capacity of small-scale fisheries;

71. Encourage local and national administrations to disseminate and communicate information on the fisheries policy developments, including on innovation and technology.

G) Promote decent work

79. Promote decent work and improve working conditions and social protection for all small-scale fisheries workers;
80. With the assistance of the GFCM, by 2019 organise a Conference that shall address the issue of social development, employment and decent work related to the small-scale fisheries.

H) Role of women

81. Support projects dedicated to enable women to endeavour small-scale fishery activities;
82. Secure equal participation of women in decision-making processes in the policies directed towards small-scale fisheries;
83. Encourage the development of better technologies appropriate to women's work in small-scale fisheries;

I) Climate and environment

84. Involve small-scale fisheries in the development of policies and plans addressing climate change in fisheries, in particular adaptation and mitigation plans, including within the context of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) set forth through the Paris Agreement;
85. Assist and support small-scale fisheries communities affected by climate change or natural and human-induced disasters;
86. Promote innovative solutions for the valorisation and utilization of invasive species;
87. Encourage small-scale fishers to actively participate in the circular economy, by, for instance, establishing a plan for the disposal and recycling of recovered nets in order to reduce the impact of ghost fishing gears. This plan may include reward for collecting marine litter.

Role of the GFCM

88. The GFCM shall provide technical assistance to developing States to create participative and cooperative management plans for small-scale fisheries;
89. The GFCM shall present at its 43rd Annual Session a timetable with the short-term and mid-term targets for the implementation of the actions listed in this plan;
90. The GFCM shall steer and coordinate actions to ensure the implementation of the Plan, and to provide an annual report on the implementation of the actions set forth in this Plan, reflecting the reports provided by riparian countries;
91. The GFCM shall organize a mid-term conference in 2024 to evaluate the progress of this Regional Plan of Action on small-scale fisheries.

Preliminary programme

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN THE
MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BLACK SEA
Ensuring best practice becomes standard practice
25–26 September 2018, Malta**

DAY 1

**Technical meeting to support discussions on the Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale
Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea
25 September 2018**

13:00 – 14:30 Participant registration

Working hours: 14:30 – 17:30

- 1. Opening addresses and general introduction of the meeting**
 - Hosting country representative
 - GFCM/FAO

- 2. Presentation and discussion of cases of best practices**
 - Scientific research and data (*Best practice case TBD*)
 - Value chain of small-scale fishing (*Best practice case TBD*)
 - Promote decent work (*Best practice case TBD*)
 - Role of women (*Best practice case TBD*)
 - Climate and environment (*Best practice case TBD*)

- 3. Special sessions on building capacity to enhance the role of stakeholders**
 - Small-scale fisheries management measures (*Co-management in small-scale fisheries – WWF*)
 - The role of the EU Mediterranean small-scale fishing organizations in participatory approaches and decision-making processes (*The Role of fishing cooperatives – MEDAC*)
 - Best practices from SSF organizations in the Mediterranean and Black Sea (*Best practice cases TBD*)

- 4. Official launch of the “Friends of SSF” coordination platform**
 - Presentation of the online mapping tool (*GFCM/WWF*)
 - Open discussion with key stakeholders

- 5. Key messages and closure of the technical meeting (*Moderator*)**

-----*Official reception for delegations and stakeholders*-----

DAY 2
High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea
26 September 2018

10:00 – 11:00 **Opening statements**

- Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
- GFCM/FAO
- Award ceremony: Best practices for small-scale fisheries

11:00 – 12:30 **Speeches by high-level representatives**

12:30 – 12:45 **Reading of the Ministerial Declaration**

12:45 – 13:00 **Ceremony of signature of the Ministerial Declaration**

13:00 **Closure of the High-level conference, including official photo shooting**

13:15 – 13:45 **Press conference**

-----*Closing cocktail reception*-----

Template for the submission of proposals of cases of best practice in small-scale fisheries

On the basis of the outcomes of the *Meeting for the preparation of the High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries* (FAO headquarters, 2 March 2018), interested stakeholders are requested to submit proposals of cases of best practices within small-scale fisheries to be presented during the High-level meeting. Proposals will be selected based on their relevance to the Regional Plan of Action for small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea (RPOA-SSF), as well as geographic diversity.

Completed forms should be submitted to GFCM-Secretariat@fao.org by 15 April 2018.

DESCRIPTION *(Please briefly describe the project/case study/example that represents a “best practice” for small-scale fisheries)*

LOCATION *(Please describe the location of the best practice case: city or region [as applicable] and country)*

OUTCOMES *(Please explain how this case has improved the situation of small-scale fisheries/fishers)*

HOW IS THIS CASE RELATED TO THE RPOA-SSF? *(Please explain why this case is an example of a “best practice” for implementing the RPOA-SSF)*

RELEVANT SECTION OF THE RPOA-SSF *(Please specify the sections of the RPOA-SSF for which this case represents a “best practice”. Check all that apply)*

- (A) Scientific research
- (B) Small-scale fisheries data
- (C) Small-scale fisheries management measures
- (D) Value chain of small-scale fishing
- (E) Associating small-scale fisheries to the participatory approaches and decision-making processes
- (F) Capacity-building
- (G) Promote decent work
- (H) Role of women
- (I) Climate and environment

VIDEO *(Please note if there are any restrictions to producing video content for this best practice case – i.e. needed permissions in order to film within the country, whether fishers would be willing to be filmed, etc.)*

CONTACT INFORMATION *(Please provide the contact information for the person who would present this case at the High-level conference, should this proposal be selected)*

Name: _____

Gender: Male Female

Professional title /
affiliation: _____

E-mail address: _____