



Statement by Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, on the Ministerial Conference on Mediterranean Fisheries

Brussels, 27 April 2016

Today I have hosted a high level Ministerial meeting with fisheries ministers from countries bordering the Mediterranean. Both EU and non-EU representatives agreed that we must step-up our actions to ensure the long term future of the fisheries sector.

Fish stocks in the Mediterranean are however shrinking: all in all, 93% of the fish stocks assessed are over-exploited. The fisheries industry is in decline, placing further pressure on the region's stability and security.

Evidence from various studies indicates that the *total* economic value of fisheries in the Mediterranean may be more than twice that of landing values and employment rates alone. Studies also show that fisheries in this region are of great socio-economic importance at the small-scale level and to coastal populations. The sector employs hundreds of thousands of people directly, and through the secondary processing sector. Many women depend on the sector for employment.

It is increasingly clear that fisheries in the Mediterranean makes a vital contribution towards food security particularly the region's most vulnerable populations. It offers a way to supplement income or food supply in times of need, contributing to regional stability.

Today's Ministerial meeting identified a number of common principles that will frame our integrated approach for the Mediterranean:

- Our response needs to be collective and based on cooperation. Acting in isolation won't work.
- We must act at all levels: international, European, regional and national.
- We must act not only on fisheries conservation measures, but also on control against illegal fishing and on improving scientific cooperation.
- We must thoroughly evaluate and manage the socio-economic impacts of conservation measures, especially for small-scale fisheries. These make up 80% of the fleet and 60% of the jobs and therefore play a key role in the sustainability of the fisheries sector.
- All stakeholders, including fishermen, scientists and NGOs, must be involved in an inclusive bottom-up decision-making process.
- We must show solidarity across the Mediterranean and assist non-EU countries in modernising their fisheries sectors.
- Restoring the sustainability of Mediterranean fisheries requires a rounded strategy that lasts. Some measures will be immediate; others will have a long-term perspective. There is no quick-fix.
- The Commission will provide guidance on how to make best use of available funding through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and the European Neighbourhood Instrument.

On this basis, I am confident that we will be able to build the comprehensive response that is needed to restore Mediterranean fish stocks and improve the livelihood of fishermen. Reversing the trend is still possible, and the recovery of blue-fin tuna is there to remind us of what we can achieve if we take our responsibilities and join forces. We are working for the future of fishermen and their families.

This Ministerial meeting agreed to reconvene in March 2017 to endorse a common declaration on the sustainability of Mediterranean fisheries.

Commissioner Vella used the occasion of the Ministerial Meeting to launch the EU Mediterranean Strategy to recover fish stocks. The campaign #Medfish4ever was launched at the Brussels Seafood expo.

Speech available [here](#).

For more information on the strategy and campaign see [here](#).

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