

Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/5
on fisheries measures for the conservation of the Mediterranean monk seal
(*Monachus monachus*) 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 area of application;

RECALLING the 2002 Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and particularly its Plan of Implementation;

RECALLING the 2003 Declaration of the Ministerial Conference for the Sustainable Development of Fisheries in the Mediterranean (2003 Venice Declaration);

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

CONSIDERING that the Mediterranean monk seal is listed under Annex II on endangered and threatened species of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol) of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), and that a regional management plan has been implemented by the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected (RAC/SPA);

RECOGNIZING that some fishing operations carried out in the GFCM area of application can adversely affect Mediterranean monk seals (hereafter referred to as “monk seal”) and there is a need to implement measures to mitigate these adverse effects;

AIMING to reduce the incidental catch of monk seals in certain fisheries;

TAKING into account the advice of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) on the need to endorse measures for the reduction of bycatch of monk seal;

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

1. Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) shall ensure the implementation of fisheries management measures that strongly mitigate the risk of incidental catch of monk seal during fishing operations.
2. Fishing vessels of CPCs shall be prohibited to take on board, transship and land monk seals in the GFCM area of application unless otherwise required to rescue and to secure assistance for the recovery of harmed individual animals and provided that the competent national authorities concerned have been duly and officially informed in advance.
3. Specimens of monk seals accidentally caught in fishing gear shall be released unharmed and alive. Should it be already dead, the carcass shall be landed and national authorities notified at the latest upon arrival at port.

4. Any event of incidental catch and release shall be recorded by the vessel owner/master in the logbook (or any other equivalent document developed by a CPC to this specific end) and reported to the respective national authorities for notification to the GFCM Secretariat.
5. CPCs shall adopt fisheries management measures based on scientific studies under their responsibility and designed, whenever appropriate, in line with SAC scientific advice, in order to have very low and close to 0 risk of monk seal incidental catch and mortality in fishing activities/operations.
6. CPCs shall provide to the GFCM Secretariat, to the best extent possible, the related maps and geographical positions identifying the location of already known, past and current monk seal caves, with information on fishing fleets using bottom-set nets registered in the ports close to the caves locations within a maximum range of 20 nautical miles. The preliminary maps and lists of geographical positions shall be established for the first time by December 2011 and notified to the GFCM Secretariat not later than 31 January 2012.
7. With a view to ensuring that the information provided by the CPCs on maps and geographic positions of monk seal caves is not detrimental to the monk seal survival, such information is transmitted to the GFCM Secretariat and treated in a restricted manner, in line with the provisions of Resolution GFCM/35/2011/2 on data confidentiality policy and procedures, amending Resolution GFCM/30/2006/1. The GFCM Secretariat shall ensure that this information is only available to carry out scientific and conservation work as required by the GFCM or by the CPC providing the original data.
8. Technical and scientific information on measures adopted under paragraph 5 shall be notified to the GFCM Secretariat within the annual national reports to the SAC.
9. The SAC, in close cooperation with scientific bodies including committees of other multilateral organizations, partners of the GFCM, shall provide, not later than February 2012, a protocol and a sampling design to carry out, whenever appropriate, new studies as referred to in paragraph 5, as well as to set a work programme with a view to evaluating the soundness of measures taken and, if necessary, to advise on additional measures including the socio-economic impact.
10. As appropriate, CPCs should, individually and collectively, engage in capacity-building efforts and other research cooperative activities to improve knowledge on monk seals and to support the effective implementation of this recommendation, including entering into cooperative arrangements with other appropriate international bodies and promoting participatory programmes with relevant stakeholders.