

**DECLARATION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE
TOWARDS ENHANCED COOPERATION ON
BLACK SEA FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE**

(“BUCHAREST DECLARATION”)

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA, 25 OCTOBER 2016

DECLARATION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE TOWARDS ENHANCED COOPERATION ON BLACK SEA FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

At the invitation of H.E. Achim Irimescu - Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Romania - the Ministers and High-Level Representatives that have met in Bucharest, Romania, on 25 October 2016 on the occasion of the “High-level Conference towards Enhanced Cooperation on Black Sea Fisheries and Aquaculture” organized by the government of Romania together with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) in cooperation with the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the International Organization for the Development of Fisheries in Central and Eastern Europe (EUROFISH):

CONSIDERING

- a. the vital role of healthy marine ecosystems and resilient living marine resources, including shared fish stocks and vulnerable species, in the context of sustainable development and blue economy for the Black Sea region;
- b. the many challenges still to be met towards the sustainable management of Black Sea living marine resources, including threats to these resources from overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, incidental catches, pernicious discarding practices, ghost fishing, marine pollution, uneven development of aquaculture and invasive species, among others;
- c. the efforts of the FAO in promoting responsible fisheries and sustainable aquaculture practices in the context of the Blue Growth Initiative and in encouraging broad participation in the 2009 “Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing”, including ratification by Black Sea riparian countries and its subsequent implementation in compliance with their flag State responsibilities;

RECALLING

- d. that currently Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey are Contracting Parties to the GFCM, Georgia and Ukraine are Cooperating non-Contracting Parties to the GFCM and positive cooperation is ongoing between the Russian Federation and the GFCM;
- e. the GFCM’s role in staunchly pursuing enhanced cooperation, with particular focus on riparian countries in the Black Sea region, building on the foundation laid through its work of the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS) which has been promoting since 2011 a concerted approach to addressing the issues and challenges facing Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture;
- f. the decisive progress made towards improved intra-governmental coordination among relevant regional organizations, including existing memoranda of understanding between GFCM-FAO and ACCOBAMS, the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution and EUROFISH, as well as ongoing cooperation with the Black Sea Economic Cooperation;

TAKING NOTE

- g. of the technical outputs of the expert meeting held on 24 October 2016 to inform discussions at this high-level conference, as reproduced in the Annex to this Declaration.

We, the Ministers and High-level Representatives,

1. encourage a common and collaborative approach to cooperation amongst riparian countries in the Black Sea region with a view to promote the rational exploitation of marine living resources, the sustainable development of aquaculture and the mitigation of threats facing the marine environment and vulnerable species so as to ensure healthy and productive ecosystems. To this

end, we recognize that regional cooperation and synergies in the Black Sea region should be enhanced, taking into account each country's particular characteristics in order to meet relevant global commitments such as the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

2. acknowledge, to this end, the positive role of the GFCM as the regional organization with competency over fisheries and aquaculture in the Black Sea and note, in particular, the "Mid-term Strategy (2017-2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries" which adapts the targets in the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets to the specificities of the Black Sea region;
3. within this context, look forward to increased coordination and synergies among relevant organizations with competence in the Black Sea region, including, but not limited to, ACCOBAMS, the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and EUROFISH;
4. call upon Black Sea riparian countries to implement more stringent measures for efficient monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems in their exclusive economic zones by having established necessary infrastructure and capacity, including through the GFCM;
5. also call upon Black Sea riparian countries to enhance multilateral cooperation and implement actions to improve the sustainability of resources, particularly with regard to scientific advice, sustainable small-scale fisheries, MCS, capacity building, as well as actions emanating from a Regional Plan of Action to fight IUU fishing;
6. recognize the need for a regional project as a means to promote technical cooperation in matters relating to the sustainable development of Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture and commend the efforts by the GFCM and relevant partner organizations to launch this project - BlackSea4Fish - and implement it in a concerted manner at the regional level, with a view to facilitating coordination between national administrations in charge of fisheries and marine environment;
7. invite the GFCM to regularly evaluate progress in the implementation of this declaration through the most appropriate means.

**TECHNICAL OUTPUTS OF THE EXPERT MEETING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL
CONFERENCE TOWARDS ENHANCED COOPERATION ON BLACK SEA
FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE**

(24 October 2016, Bucharest, Romania)

Panel 1: State of Black Sea living marine resources and their ecosystem

The Participants in the Expert Meeting of the “High-Level Conference Towards Enhanced Cooperation on Black Sea Fisheries and Aquaculture”

- Having considered the importance of accurate and timely data, of reconstructed time series and of jointly analysing existing data and information for the development of scientific advice towards effective management measures for Black Sea fisheries;
- Having also considered that the data currently used in formulating scientific advice may be fragmented, limited in time or spatial coverage and/or based on dated critical assumptions;
- Having recognized the particular ecological features of the Black Sea and the need to mitigate negative interactions between fisheries and the Black Sea marine environment by reducing discards and incidental catches of vulnerable species and by better understanding the role of invasive species;
- Having acknowledged the relevance of small-scale fisheries and the overall socio-economic importance of fisheries in the Black Sea, with the aim of maximizing the value of fishery products in support of livelihoods while at the same time mitigating the pernicious impacts of incentivizing fishing for high-value species;
- Being aware of the crucial role of cooperation between national administrations dealing with fisheries and the marine environment as well as of the equally crucial role of cooperation among relevant international organizations in the Black Sea;

Formulated the following recommendations emerging from the panel discussions:

- Relevant organizations operating in the Black Sea region shall cooperate 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 socio-economic data, discards, incidental catches of vulnerable species, invasive species and other aspects of marine ecosystems.
- The GFCM, with the collaboration of national administrations and the participation of scientists from research institutes of the different riparian countries, shall coordinate the preparation and execution of surveys at sea. These surveys shall support the assessment of main commercial stocks in the area, addressing crucial issues such as stock boundaries and the adoption of efficient management measures.
- The GFCM shall provide technical assistance and organize capacity building activities towards improving existing expertise on fisheries. In particular, scientific monitoring capabilities at the

national level shall be supported with a view to underpinning the collection, sharing and analysis of fisheries-related data at the regional level in support of fisheries management.

- The visibility of the small-scale fisheries sector as well as the participation in the collection of data and in fisheries co-management by small-scale fishers and local fishing communities shall be increased and sustainable value chains for small-scale Black Sea fisheries shall be promoted.
- The BlackSea4Fish project, as previously promoted by the WGBS and endorsed by Black Sea riparian countries, shall provide support to the execution of technical activities ensuring the provision of scientific advice in support of decision-making processes for Black Sea fisheries.

Panel 2: Existing knowledge and efforts towards the assessment and eradication of IUU fishing in the Black Sea

The Participants in the Expert Meeting of the “High-Level Conference Towards Enhanced Cooperation on Black Sea Fisheries and Aquaculture

- Having considered that the impacts of IUU fishing, in particular unreported fishing, are a source of serious concern for all riparian countries;
- Being aware that without effective measures to fight against IUU fishing, such as port state measures and MCS, the sustainability of Black Sea living marine resources cannot be attained;
- Being concerned for the lack of awareness by the general public of threats and problems associated with IUU fishing in the Black Sea region;

Formulated the following recommendations emerging from the panel discussions:

- The magnitude of IUU fishing in the Black Sea region shall be regularly assessed by the GFCM. To this end, experts in the region will contribute to collect data and information to evaluate, in particular, the impacts of unreported fishing, including in the context of an ad hoc working group on the assessment of IUU fishing;
- The GFCM shall assist Black Sea riparian countries in coordinating their MCS measures with a view to facilitating a regionally harmonized control system, including the exchange of port state data and the implementation of VMS and alternative technologies to VMS;
- National training of inspectors and joint monitoring schemes shall be promoted and technical assistance to build the regional capacity in the fight against IUU fishing shall be provided, including through coordinated efforts by the GFCM and other competent organizations;
- The international day for the fight against IUU fishing shall contribute to launching campaigns across the Black Sea region to raise awareness of the main problems associated with IUU fishing, as well as carrying out vocational activities and the dissemination of information to the general public.

Panel 3: Current state and future perspectives for the responsible development of aquaculture in the Black Sea

The Participants at the Expert Meeting of the “High-Level Conference Towards Enhanced Cooperation on Black Sea Fisheries and Aquaculture”

- Having recognized that aquaculture development in the Black Sea, to date, has been limited by a number of constraints, including environmental factors (e.g. climate variability, pollution), governance factors (e.g. burdensome administrative procedures), economic factors (e.g. high initial costs, shortage of funding support) and social factors (e.g. lack of aquaculture farmer organisations);
- Having considered the large potential of the aquaculture sector in the Black Sea for future development thanks to the availability of various environments, sites, capacities, technologies and species and thanks to the positive role of aquaculture in the context of food security, employment and better economic opportunities for coastal communities;
- Having taken note of the need to share knowledge on best practices to address common challenges within the aquaculture sector with particular regard to marine spatial planning, including the development of Allocated Zones for Aquaculture (AZAs);

Formulated the following recommendations emerging from the panel discussions:

- An ad hoc approach to responsible aquaculture development, which takes into consideration the particular features of the Black Sea, shall be promoted in accordance with specific objectives and growing expectations in the countries of the region. This approach shall also address the varying environmental, governance, economic and social needs of the sector and shall include systems to monitor sustainability and progress.
- Measures shall be taken to facilitate the adoption of legislative and regulatory frameworks for aquaculture development in support of the sector with a view to facilitating investments and limiting conflicts among different users, thus promoting coordination among institutions and concerned stakeholders.
- The development of AZA shall be facilitated when addressing capacity building needs in coordination with different authorities and users involved in national plans.
- Efforts shall be made to improve market access in the aquaculture sector and to promote market-driven sustainable activities, such as mussel farming.
- Technical assistance shall be provided with a view to building capacity towards sustainable aquaculture development and countries in the Black Sea region shall make efforts to share knowledge and technical expertise to address common challenges hampering this development.