MEDAC - Registered Office Via XX Settembre, 20 - c/o Ministero delle Politiche Agricole Alimentari e Forestali - 00187 Rome (Italy) - Tax identification number 97534810581 - Association registered with the Prefecture of Rome as a legal entity n.1224/2017

MEDAC
MEDITERRANEAN ADVISORY COUNCIL

Ref.: 118/2018

Rome, 24th April 2018

Subject: MEDAC contribution to the draft RPOA on SSF

Please find attached the MEDAC contribution to the draft of the Regional Plan of Action (RPOA) on small-scale fisheries (SSF), approved by consensus by the ExCom members.

The discussion that took place during the MEDAC Working Group 5 meeting, held on 13th April 2018, highlighted the fact that there is a widespread desire to see how to deal with the problem of the definition of small-scale fisheries, given that the current definition is considered, according to the circumstance, to be either not inclusive, too rigid or not coherent with the real situation within the sector. The MEDAC raised this issue in 2010 with the approval of the "RACMED Opinion on a possible differentiated regime for small-scale coastal fisheries" prot.31/2010 of 3rd July 2010, which is attached in case it is required.

In connection with this, the MEDAC also believes that the concept of "low impact" applied to SSF should be discussed considering the aspects related to aid policies and access to fishing resources.

Lastly, the MEDAC would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation for the recognition in the RPOA of the role of women in the sector.

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President

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MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BLACK SEA

MALTA, 26 SEPTEMBER 2018

MEDAC CONTRIBUTION

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

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 support and promote*** 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 ***to establish*** the objectives, principles and concrete actions that should be applied for ensuring the long-term environmental, economic and social sustainability of ***the Mediterranean Coastal Fisheries (including also*** small-scale fisheries);

3. Since millennia, the small-scale fisheries sector ***has supported*** the livelihood of the coastal communities and local economies. ***It provides socio-economic value, and, in cases of subsistence economies, it may play an important role for food security***. 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 fisheries are "labour intensive" activities with a strong direct involvement of fishermen on multi-gear and multi-species activities, strictly linked to the seasonal variations

6. 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, ***contributing to their food security as well as an important source of direct and indirect employment***. They play a pivotal role in social inclusion and cohesion by maintaining populations in remote ***or disadvantaged coastal*** areas;

7. 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;

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8. However, in some countries the sector lacks recognition and ***dedicated*** representativeness, in particular due to the ***atomisation of*** fishing activities, ***the economic difficulty for fishers to leave their business while representing their sector's interests*** and due to the presence of other industries and maritime economies. Furthermore, there is lack of clear characterization of the sector ***and the lack of dedicated and specific small-scale and low impact fishing organisations organized and connected at all levels***;

9. 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 ***preventing also that their ecological knowledge, collective ideas and proposals are heard and taken into account***;

~~10. The small scale fishing 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;~~

11. Many other maritime activities interact with the small-scale fisheries over access to marine space, infrastructure and ports leading to marine pollution and altered marine ecosystems which have an impact on small-scale fisheries. The maritime economies particularly ***interacting with*** Small-Scale Fisheries are, *inter alia*, ***other commercial fisheries***, hydrocarbon extraction, ocean energy projects, recreational fishery, other "métiers", ***sand extractions for beach regeneration,*** aquaculture, coastal tourism and maritime transport;

12. Nonetheless, there ***could be*** synergies and positive interactions between small-scale fisheries and other maritime activities, for instance through sharing facilities and suppliers, through the ecological tourism and ***community-based fisheries***-management ***and co-designed and in some cases through fishery co-management*** in Marine Protected Areas (MPA). ***Keeping watch, as a sentinel for marine environment during SSF fishers' long presence at sea, can be encouraged and appraised***

13. Due to their close knowledge of and connection with the marine ecosystems, small-scale fisheries are well placed for observing major environmental and climate changes. Consequently, small-scale fishers are not only resource users but ***can*** also play a role as "guardians of the sea". In this context, they should therefore play an important ***role in plastic garbage collection, providing their traditional knowledge for fisheries and environment management***. ***Alsocould develop a key role*** on waste management and recycling and be recognised as actors of the circular economy;

14. 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 (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;

15. 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 ***conservation and sustainable use of the*** oceans ***and more specifically*** 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:

16. 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;

17. Recognise the socio-economic specificities of the small-scale fisheries, such as the seasonality ***need of polyvalence*** of their activities and unstable income ***dealing at the same time with declining catches due to IUU practices, overfishing and climate change***;

18. Support livelihoods for coastal communities, especially in remote ***or disadvantaged coastal*** areas, through sustainable small-scale fisheries;

19. ***Promote co***-responsibility and awareness ***among all stakeholders*** of the need to ***achieve sustainability at all levels (economic, social and environmental);***

20. When relevant encourage the creation of bodies/ associations in view of better structuring, organising and representing the sector ***in a dedicated and specific way*** in all decision-making processes. ***Strengthen and recognize the existing dedicated organisations and platforms of small scale fishers and associations of women as stakeholders to also have into account***;

21. Improve ***data collection*** on small-scale fisheries;

22. Provide ***fair*** access to fishery resources ***and fishing grounds*** for small-scale fisheries ***while*** taking into account their socio-economic and cultural role in the local communities ***as well as their low-impact potential on the resources and marine environment***;

23. Facilitate ***direct*** access to markets and public services for small-scale fisheries communities, ***actions should be taken to promote and valorize local and fresh fish***;

24. Give adequate attention and financial support for small-scale fisheries

25. Ensure proper establishment of control, monitoring and surveillance system for small-scale fisheries;

26. Promote small-scale fisheries access to new technologies and their use aiming to improve their safety, monitoring, control and surveillance;

27. Promote the utilisation of fishing practices that minimize ***unwanted catches*** and damage to the ***marine*** environment;

28. Prevent any practice that would contribute to underground economy and the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities (IUU). ***Extend surveillance against IUU which often jeopardises economic profitability of coexisting SSF***;

29. Avoid policies ***and financial support*** that contribute to overcapacity that can negatively affect the ***marine ecosystems and the*** small-scale fishing communities;

30. Reinforce the value chain of the sector, notably for locally caught fish, ***often with a low commercial value and with low-impact fishing techniques,*** in order to maximise the ***social and*** economic benefits of small-scale fisheries;

31. 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;

32. Support the diversification of activities with the aim of ensuring the sustainable development of the sector of coastal communities ***and the protection of the marine environment***;

33. Raise the qualification levels and skills of fishermen

34. Make efforts so that the ***establishment of*** MPAs ***and FRAs is done as a result of a bottom-up process where local small-scale fishers are involved, they*** are perceived positively by the fishers and that their ***long-term benefits of their*** establishment does not create competing constraints for fishers. ***At the same time, legally establish those MPAs that are initiative and proposed by the fishing sector. Regularly scientifically assess biomass improvement from MPA implementation, and share this data with fishers***;

35. Recognise the social dialogue processes and establishment of co-management policies as key factors that can guarantee the good governance in the sea and sustainable management of the fisheries resources;

36. Take due account of small-scale fisheries in maritime spatial planning and in interaction with other sectors, such as ***industrial and*** recreational fishing, aquaculture, ***renewable marine energies*** oil drilling, transport and tourism;

37. ***Ensure*** 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, ***marine spatial planning and MPA management*** tourism and infrastructure. ***Convince them to use these dialogue opportunities to promote sustainability efforts implemented by the sector***;

38. Promote decent work and working conditions throughout the entire value chain for small-scale fisheries;

39. ***Recognize and support*** the particular role of women in the economy of small-scale fisheries and coastal communities;

40. Recognise and take into account the impact of natural and human-induced disasters and climate change on the small-scale fisheries ***and their potential role in the recovery of the fish stock***;

41. 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;

42. **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.

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

The Plan is composed of the following actions:

43. 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, **low impact fishing practices** etc.).*

A) Scientific research

44. Setting thresholds and proxies to assess the state of coastal marine resources. Different data limited assessments may be used and should be encouraged in different scientific fora such as STECF, or the GFCM -SAC and the participation of SSF should be favoured in each scientific protocol

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

46. Understand the social aspects of fisheries household and the social structure of fisheries communities and women contribution

47. Develop scientific studies to strengthen knowledge about the interaction between small-scale fisheries and marine ecosystems and ***their impact on*** marine resources;

48. ***Develop scientific studies to strengthen knowledge about the interaction between recreational fisheries and small-scale fisheries***;

49. Design implementation of pilot and innovative projects covering all aspects of small-scale fisheries ***including self-monitoring systems combined with observers on board to collect data on target species, unwanted catches bycatch and impact on benthic communities***;

50. 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 collection **and scientific evaluation***

51. 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 ***and regular scientific assessments of stocks targeted by the sector;***

52. Establish national fishing fleet registers that record ***all*** small-scale fishing vessels;

53. Incorporate the traditional ecological knowledge of small scale fishers into fisheries management

C) *Small-scale fisheries management measures*

47. Implement, where appropriate, ***ecosystems based multiannual*** management plans which establish specific rules designed ***to restore and maintain the populations of fish stocks and ensuring environmental, economic and social sustainability of fishing activities, including both commercial and recreational fisheries favour, within the commercial sector***, access for sustainable and 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, ***minimize interaction with protected species and 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,* ***refrigerated warehouse, drinking water service, ice machines***, *etc*);

51. Promote the reduction of ***unwanted*** catches by, inter alia, ***spatial-temporal closures*** selectivity of gear, ***promoting mitigation and suitable management measures exhaust traps***, training fishers and strengthening ***marine wildlife*** 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. ***Develop small scale fishers training programs for optimal use of such technologies***;

53. Require that small-scale fisheries vessels be easily traced through the use of most appropriate and cost-effective technologies based on radio frequencies, satellites or internet applications;

54. ***Require the*** 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. Strengthen control and surveillance of all fishing activities, including commercial and recreational fisheries, both at sea and land, making efforts to avoid IUU fishing practices;

57. Promote, ***where appropriate and in line with scientific advice,*** the construction of artificial reefs 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;

58. Prepare best practice guidelines to extend and share good experiences at the regional level;

D) *Value chain of small-scale fisheries*

59. Promote the creation ***or reinforcement of the existing ones*** of cooperatives, producers' organisations or other collective organisations in order to improve market access ***to small scale fisheries products*** and to increase the availability of local food and market opportunities to coastal communities;

60. Establish regional plans for the fisheries producer organisations in order to increase their profitability and improve the quality ***and traceability*** of their products;

61. Enhance the promotion of direct sales of fresh fish, ***and commercial communication about local SSF good practices*** in accordance with the national legislation;

62. 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 ***and underutilized*** species, aiming at increased diversity of catches;

63. Promote the creation of ***seafood*** product labels and certified brands to encourage operators and consumers to buy local ***and sustainable fished seafood***. Encouraging the creation of ***affordable*** certified brands should promote responsible local and small-scale fishing and make the consumer aware of sustainable fisheries;

64. Encourage the first processing of landings by the fishers themselves, their cooperatives or their producers' organisations to expand the shelf-life of food.

65. 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) ***Engage with*** *small-scale fisheries to* ***establish*** *participative decision-making processes*

64. ***Integrate*** small-scale fisheries ***sector, included women organisations***, in the creation and implementation of maritime and local development strategies;

65. Ensure that there is dedicated and specific small-scale fisher representatives in the local, national and regional decision-making process, with a direct stake in small-scale fisheries;

66. ***Ensure a*** participative ***approach in the designation and*** management of Marine Protected Areas of small-scale fishers, ***through*** co-management, ***which will enable*** the commitment and compliance with rules ***of all stakeholders***, conflict resolution and sustainable management through an integrated ***ecosystem-based*** management plan ***in line with scientific recommendations***;

67. Ensure that maritime spatial planning at the national and regional level takes account small-scale fisheries and that it is ***specifically*** represented through the entire process;

68. Promote participative management systems, ***for responsible, low impact fisheries*** such as co-management bodies, where fisheries management measures and accompanying socio-economic programmes ***defined*** and implemented;

69. Where necessary, at the national level reinforce the analysis of legislation and institutional mechanisms which ensure the ***recognition of dedicated small-scale fishers organizations and their*** inclusion in all activities regarding the sustainable development of the sector;

70. Establish roadmaps / plans ***with the participation of the small-scale fishing sector*** 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 ***sustainable*** aquaculture;

71. These plans should result in concrete benefits for ***responsible*** small-scale fisheries, such as: shared infrastructure, ***direct selling opportunities and*** suppliers or workers, multi-purpose activities, , collection of marine organisms for marine technology, better monitoring and understanding of marine ecosystems for sustainable fishing;

72. Organise supporting structures with the aim to address competing situations that may occur between small-scale fisheries and other interacting sectors;

73. Encourage good cooperation ***and understanding*** between small-scale fisheries and recreational fishery activities, ***notably in mutual efforts to improve public awareness to marine environment (information boards in harbours and on beaches describing shared uses and best practices; co-writing of informative leaflets);***

F) Capacity building

74. Establish a regional platform to engage and promote ***cooperation*** among small-scale fisheries associations ***(including women 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;

75. 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 ***and women organizations to simplify the*** accessing to the institutional funds including funds ***to ensure transition towards long term selective and sustainable fisheries***;
    c. Supporting sustainable development and reinforcement of the existing small-scale fisheries organisations and their networks;
    d. Ensuring access to consultancy bodies;
    e. Facilitating education and training opportunities ***for men and women of the fisheries sector***, such as ***low-season*** universities, aiming at developing fisheries-specific skills, policy knowledge (*fisheries, environmental*) and, in particular, knowledge of innovative solutions and technology developments;

76. In the context of the local community's development, implement regional diversification schemes that help small-scale fishers (***including women of the fisheries sector***) diversify their activities (for example, ***entrepreneurship and*** leadership training, nautical and ecological tourism, recycling waste found at sea, ***marine scientific sampling missions***);

77. The above measures shall be applicable to the small-scale fishers and their families. Particular attention shall be given to women and young fishers. ***Generational transmission of the small fishing activity may***

economically depend on occupation evolution towards multi-activity (fishing and ecological tourism for example);

78. 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;

79. ***Ensure that*** local and national administrations to disseminate and communicate information on the fisheries policy developments, including on innovation and technology.

80. Improve and increase the professional training of fishermen aiming to facilitate the generational turnover;

G) Promote decent work

79. Promote decent work and improve working conditions and social protection for all small-scale fisheries workers ***in line with the ILO Fishing Convention No.188 (2007);***

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. ***encourage social protection and an improvement in working conditions for women;***

82. ***Progressively*** secure equal participation of women in decision-making processes in the policies directed towards small-scale fisheries;

83. Encourage ***and financially support*** the development of better ***and appropriate*** technologies dedicated to women's work in small-scale fisheries;

I) Climate and environment

84. Involve small-scale fisheries in ***providing knowledge and 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 ***minimizing*** the ***impacts of invasive species, such as*** valorisation and utilization of invasive species, (***setting proper measures to ensure that the introduction of these species is not incited) and adaptation of small-scale fishery sector. Specially support areas which are extensively and continually impacted by invasive species which have a direct effect on the livelihood of Small-scale Fishers***;

86. 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 ***economic advantages*** for collecting marine litter. ***Collection of marine litter can be seen as in-kind activity to be included as co-financing in request of national or regional funds to improve long term fishery sustainability.***

Role of the GFCM

87. The GFCM shall provide technical assistance to developing States to create participative and cooperative management plans for small-scale fisheries;

88. 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;

89. 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;

90. The GFCM shall organize a mid-term conference in 2024 to evaluate the progress of this Regional Plan of Action on small-scale fisheries.