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Rome, 3 March 2020

Virginijus Sinkevicius
Commissioner
Environment, Oceans and Fisheries
Virginijus.SINKEVICIUS@ec.europa.eu

Dear Commissioner Sinkevičius,

the MEDAC met on 18 and 19 February in Rome to progress the discussion in the Working Groups. Among the different topics that were addressed, the Focus Group on the Strait of Sicily analysed GFCM Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/6 on management measures for sustainable trawl fisheries targeting giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Strait of Sicily.

A researcher from the Italian National Research Centre and another from the Zoological Station Anton Dohrn attended the Focus Group as experts as well as several members representing the fisheries sector in the area. During the meeting the EFCA representative presented the Joint Deployment Plan for 2019 in the Strait of Sicily and it was highlighted that, in contrast with the rules applied by their own country as well as the GFCM recommendations, vessels from the Egyptian fishing fleet carry out fishing activities intensively in the Strait of Sicily, especially in shallow waters, even though none of the vessels are listed in the register of fishing vessels authorised to operate in the Strait (as per GFCM Recommendation 39/2015/3). The 100% of the Egyptian vessels inspected were associated with a potential non-compliance.

During the discussion, the great concern of all those attending the meeting came as a clear message. The ever-increasing activities of the Egyptian fishing fleet could jeopardize all the efforts that the countries concerned (mainly Italy and Tunisia) made to adopt multi-annual management measures for the fisheries involved (FRAs etc...).

We therefore consider it appropriate to report this matter and inform you that there is growing concern over the proper evaluation of the situation and the measures to be discussed in the framework of the GFCM by the representatives of the EC during the upcoming scheduled meetings.

Yours sincerely,

Giampaolo Buonfiglio
Chair

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