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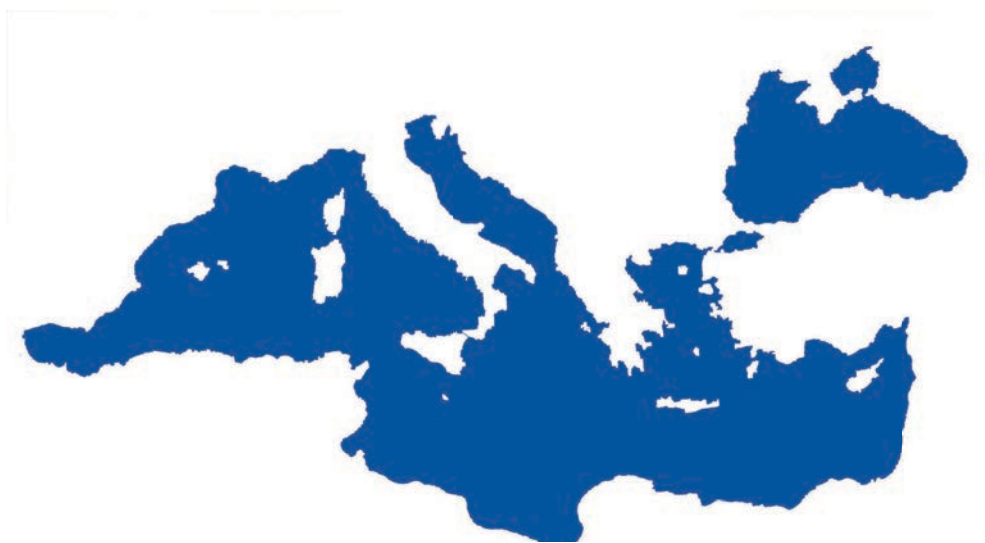
General Fisheries Commission
for the Mediterranean
Commission générale des pêches
pour la Méditerranée

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The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2016

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GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN
COMMISSION GÉNÉRALE DES PÊCHES POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
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Foreword

Few other parts of the world offer the confluence of multifaceted ecological, economic, cultural, social and legal realities that can be found in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region. Historically, fishing in these seas has always been an important economic activity that has provided livelihood opportunities for hundreds of thousands of people and has shaped the cultural fabric of the region's coastal towns and communities. Today, the sea still plays a central role, proving to be increasingly pivotal for the region's sustainable development. The marine resources and ecosystems of this region, however, have come under increasing pressure in recent decades, driven by demographic and economic growth as well as by diversification and intensification of marine and maritime activities. Pollution, alien species, illegal fishing and overfishing all pose threats, not only to the ecosystems but also to the well-being of Mediterranean and Black Sea coastal communities and riparian States. Within this context, the work of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean to promote the development, conservation, rational management and best utilization of living marine resources in this area is of paramount importance.

This first edition of the *State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries* stems from the need to provide a comprehensive overview of the status of fisheries in this region, looking at their main features and trends, in order to better inform their management and better examine the challenges that they will face in the near future. The report is the fruit of an effort strongly supported by our Commission which, at its thirty-eighth session in May 2014, formally requested the Secretariat to prepare a publication, based on data submitted by its member countries and on information produced by its scientific bodies. The aim was to produce a document that could provide useful analysis and direction for decision-making and future action. In this respect, this publication also represents a convenient source of information for the FAO Committee on Fisheries and offers a practical complement to the data provided in the *State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture* published by the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department.

The Mediterranean and Black Sea region has been a pioneer in the advancement of collaboration towards common management of fisheries resources. From as early as 1948, this region has benefitted from a common forum, the GFCM, for the promotion of regional cooperation. Established under the auspices and support of FAO, the GFCM has always enjoyed the support of a large number of Mediterranean and Black Sea States and has emerged as a point of reference among regional fisheries management organizations. Not only does it play a crucial role in regional dialogue and policy coordination among its 24 contracting parties and two cooperating non-contracting parties, but it also facilitates important interaction and cooperation with other international organizations.

In recent years, enormous strides have been made in improving the knowledge and conservation of the region's living marine resources. For example, through the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries, our Commission has considerably improved both the quantity and the quality of its scientific advice, the results of which are evident in this report. Action has also been taken to adopt management plans to promptly invert the trend of the most critically unsustainably exploited stocks in the region and to protect vulnerable habitats.

Although much progress has been made, much is still to be done. Chief among the principal management challenges for Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries are the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, the implementation of additional management plans for the exploitation of all fish stocks, and measures to reduce bycatch, including both discards and incidental catch of vulnerable species. The need to integrate socio-economic analysis into management efforts is also of particular importance. As demonstrated by the Blue Growth

approach promoted by the FAO, which is anchored in the principles set out in the benchmark Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries back in 1995, efforts to promote conservation and resource management also hold the potential to reduce poverty and promote food security. In this regard, encouraging the sustainable development of small-scale fisheries is imperative. By endorsing the concept of “Blue Growth”, particularly through small-scale fisheries, we look to the sea to generate economic opportunity and to promote the sustainable development of coastal communities and States.

This report offers an important benchmark from which to measure our future action on these crucial challenges. We see it as marking an important step towards the regular dissemination of information on the status of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries. It is our hope that this work bears much fruit by informing analyses of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, supporting strategic decision-making and helping to monitor progress towards the sustainability of our fisheries for generations to come.

Abdellah Srour
Executive Secretary
General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean