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Rome, 22nd March 2013

REPORT OF THE RAC MED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the RAC MED Executive Committee was held on 6th November 2012 in the meeting room of the “Palazzo della Cooperazione” in Rome. The meeting was called to consider and discuss the following matters:

Agenda

1. The adoption of the report of the Executive Committee meeting held in Barcelona, 30th May 2012
2. A presentation by a representative of DG MARE on the EU approach in the framework of the GFCM modernization process and its future developments (Fabrizio Donatella; Lucia Antonini)
3. The current situation where the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy is concerned (Giampaolo Buonfiglio)
4. Communication by the Commission concerning formal notice to the Mediterranean Member States on the incorrect application of mesh size (Mario Ferretti)
5. The EC position on mesh size, which should be greater before the codend (Mario Ferretti)
6. The composition of the Executive Committee – amendments
7. The updated list of the RAC MED members, membership fee payments for 2012 and the membership requests that have been received;
8. Any other matters

At the time the meeting began the following participants were present:

Fabio Massa; Abdellah Srour; Erika Monnati; Paolo Pelusi; Mario Ferretti; Francesco Zizzo; José Maria Gallart; Kahoul Mourad; Giampaolo Buonfiglio; Jose Manuel Gonzalez Gil De Bernabé; Edouard Pages; Rosa Caggiano; Marco Sammicheli; Iolanda Piedra; Joan Parera Molero; Eusebi Esgleas Pares; Mario Vizcarro; Oscar Sagué; Didier De Vandeul; Susana Sainz-Trapaga; Amelie Malafosse; Antoni Garau Coll; Gianfranco Santolini; Marc Planas; Fabrizio Donatella; Lucia Antonini; Paul Piscopo; Gennaro Scognamiglio; Francis Caruana; Philippe Maraval; Marco Rinaldi; Isabella Verardi; Sergio Schiavone; Massimo Brogna.

The list of participants was signed by all present and is annexed to this report.

Mr Mourad Kahoul was elected Chair of the meeting and the meeting secretary was Ms Rosa Caggiano.



The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The Secretary presented the agenda items, under “any other matters” the FNCP requested the opportunity to describe the recent incident in Tarragona in order to complete the information given during the General Assembly. Big Game Italia asked for a chance to intervene in order to receive clarifications on the way in which the Executive Committee works; the WWF requested further details on the participation of RAC MED at the meeting held in Brussels on 18th October and on the matter of RAC MED representation. The agenda was adopted with these amendments.

Agenda item 1: Adoption of the report of the Executive Committee meeting held in Barcelona (30th May 2012)

The report was adopted with two changes: a request from FNCP saw the addition of an annex to the report, containing a summary of the presentation made by its General Secretary on the Cofradias; the WWF requested a slight change to the intervention made.

Agenda item 2: Presentation by a representative of DG MARE on the EU approach in the framework of the GFCM modernization process and its future developments

The Chair gave the floor to Fabrizio Donatella who introduced the presentation on the EC observations relative to the guidelines for the adoption of the GFCM Long Term Management Plans (LTMP). The EC is establishing a strategy for the Mediterranean through the development of integrated maritime policies, so as to foster greater cooperation and involvement of all stakeholders in the Mediterranean basin and to guarantee the greatest possible number of shared regulations.

One of the initiatives being pursued concerns the possibility of working with the partners in the southern Mediterranean area, it has therefore been decided that collaboration with the GFCM should be a priority. One aim of the presentation was to demonstrate the concrete aspects that can be improved; Lucia Antonini used slides to present the results of the last GFCM session, on the basis of the achievements described and of the ongoing modernization process, she outlined the priorities that should be discussed. Lastly the technical aspects of the LTMPs were presented. Since the last session of the GFCM it has emerged that the political will exists to reform and modernize the GFCM even if it will be a lengthy process, involving real commitment by all interested parties.

The Chair, Mr Kahoul, thanked the EC for the presentation and underlined that the GFCM is the only channel through which it will be possible to work with the southern Mediterranean countries. The Lega Pesca representative recalled that fisheries operators expect standardization of the regulations applied throughout the Mediterranean, given that there are seven European and fourteen non-European nations, the regulations in force diverge significantly and are entirely ineffective if they are not respected by all parties. Mr Donatella replied that if the regulations are adopted at GFCM level then it would be possible to achieve a joint solution. Where the market limitations are concerned, it is not possible to use the GFCM to control such mechanisms, the GFCM is a valuable tool in the attempt to ensure that



regulations are as far as possible applied by all parties. Moreover, the GFCM is not the only organization, it is also necessary to work with ICCAT as well as bilaterally with countries that have economic and political difficulties.

The deputy Chair, Mr Buonfiglio, recalled the words of the GFCM President during the General Assembly when he stated the fundamental importance of the full participation of stakeholders in conjunction with scientific consultation. The RACs are the only organisms that involve all the interested parties, however their limited budget means that they will need to be strengthened from an operative point of view and greater cooperation should be sought with the GFCM. The results would be better and more tangible if, within the reform to the CFP, the relationship between the EC and the GFCM were consolidated, at the same time it would be necessary to see RACMED strengthened in order to focus on the most important issues and enter into the decision making process in a proactive and efficient manner.

The GFCM Executive Secretary underlined the concepts already stated by the DG MARE representatives: without doubt the GFCM supports the need to give greater weight to scientific opinion. In order to see that the GFCM recommendations are also respected by non EU countries, it has been decided that the task force will also deal with the possibility to apply sanctions. He concluded by reiterating that it is necessary to strengthen the scientific foundations and make well-thought-out decisions that take account of all the biological aspects, in this way the decisions will be shared and respected by all those involved.

The WWF representative expressed her appreciation of the EC initiative as well as the consideration that it would be desirable to see the participation of the RACs in the development of the LTMPs. The CRPMEM LR representative reiterated that the sector's experts should be involved from the initial stages of development of the management plans, through the RACs, in order to provide an opinion on the sustainability of the plans being drafted. Lastly he expressed the belief that the RACs do not receive sufficient funding.

Agenda item 3: The current situation where the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy is concerned

The deputy Chair, Mr Buonfiglio, provided an update on the reform to the CFP, covering all the most important steps. The European Parliament (EP) has still not agreed on the over 2500 amendments presented and is thus delaying the final vote, which is currently due to take place at the end of November. The following issues are among the most important changes in the Rodust report: where the ban on discards is concerned, there is a proposal to evaluate the possibility of a transition period for the Mediterranean; the EP is also willing to consider maintaining demolitions for a transition period; there are interesting forms of cooperation with third party countries. The importance of traceability of aquaculture products is confirmed, together with the strengthening of the RACs. A worrying aspect in the most recent version by the EP is the plan to abolish transferability of the fishing concessions in the initial period. Furthermore, in the Mediterranean, some of the EP amendments propose the substitution of transferable fishing concessions with territorial concessions; the total closure of areas between 10% and 20% of territorial waters for 5 – 10 years. Further proposals by the EP include the installation of video cameras on board and the reform of the RAC Executive Committee to 50 / 50 instead of 2/3 – 1/3 so as to reduce the presence of



professional fishers. Where discards are concerned, it was recalled that the Commissioner had reiterated that it is not possible to implement their progressive reduction, and that a date should be set for the ban on all discards. Where the EMFF is concerned, Mr Buonfiglio informed the Meeting that, during the Council of Ministers held on 29th October, the issue was raised once more of possible subsidies for fleet demolition, of which 15% would be managed by the Member States, choosing between temporarily halting activities, demolition or engine replacement. It is therefore possible to imagine that demolitions will be phased out. Where modernization, or “structural interventions” are concerned, expenditure is expected to be over 15% of each Member State’s budget. In conclusion the Meeting was informed that it will be possible to continue the practice of temporarily halting activities in the Mediterranean but only if included in the management plans approved by the Member States.

Agenda items 4 and 5: Communication by the Commission concerning formal notice to the Mediterranean Member States on the incorrect application of mesh size; The EC position on mesh size, which should be greater before the codend

Mr Ferretti presented the difficulties in applying the technical measures described in EC Regulation n.1967/2006, starting from the problems in interpreting the dimension to be applied and the measurement of the mesh as well as the issue of the length of the codend. Art. 8 does not allow for mesh under 40 mm; Art. 9, while not specifying the length of the codend, states that it can be exchanged for 50 mm diamond meshed nets instead of 40 mm square meshed nets. The EC maintains that the codend is 50 mm diamond mesh and the lengthener should be of the same size. On the contrary Annex 1 declares that the circumference of the net cannot increase from the opening towards the codend, however it does not state that the mesh size cannot increase from the opening to the codend. To further complicate matters there is the explanatory note from DG MARE which establishes that the codend of a trawl net in the Mediterranean can be between 5.5 and 7 meters while the Regulation does not provide this indication.

Where the measurement of mesh size is concerned, there is a specific technical instrument that tends to break easily. Art. 9 was later modified by Regulation n. 1343/2011 which provides additional complication to the interpretation as it adds: *“at the duly justified request of the ship-owner, there can be a diamond meshed net of 50 mm with an acknowledged size selectivity equivalent to or higher than that of square-meshed nets of 40 mm at the cod-end.”* 40 mm square meshed nets are more selective for hake and mullet while 50 mm diamond meshed nets are more selective for sole or flat fish. Moreover a further uncertainty concerns the lack of a sentence that specifies how the codend and the lengthener should be sewn together.

The Lega Pesca representative underlined that fisheries operators complain that no clear and definite stance is taken on the matter of net size; the continuous modification of parts of the net is very costly and there is a constant risk of penalties and of not being able to work.

Mr Buonfiglio informed those present that it will be possible to modify the text of the Regulation on the Mediterranean from next year, subject to revision from 1st June 2013. Where the question of mesh size is concerned,



he recalled that RAC MED issued an Opinion last year in the hope that the suggestions would be taken into consideration during the revision of the Regulation.

The FNCP representative informed the Meeting that the Spanish Administration circulated an explanatory letter on Art. 9, the interpretation of which had led to technical and legal doubts, and therefore to problems in its practical application. In the light of this the FNCP conducted a literal analysis of the text and requested clarification by the DG MARE services, however no official reply has been received. In any case these rules are deemed to be unfair and therefore should be modified. The FNCCP representative stressed that it is necessary to study the issue of trawl selectivity to find the best solution to the question of a mesh size that improves selectivity without damaging the catch.

The representative of DG MARE apologized for not being able to intervene precisely in this extremely technical discussion, he further informed the Meeting that he is not aware of any revision to the Mediterranean regulation.

Agenda item 6: The composition of the Executive Committee – amendments

The Executive Secretary informed the Meeting that the Maltese association GKTS will become a member of the Executive Committee, and that it is the first time that a Maltese association participates in RAC MED. The participants approved the proposal made by the Secretary.

Agenda item 7: The updated list of the RAC MED members, membership fee payments for 2012 and the membership requests that have been received

The Executive Secretary illustrated the updated list of RAC MED members and asked the Meeting to approve the membership of another two Italian associations (FIPSAS e UNCIPESCA) which have completed all the necessary procedures. There were no objections and therefore the RAC MED members increased from 36 to 38, because in the meantime two associations have been excluded (ANACEME e FEDEROP.IT) having not paid their annual fees. Furthermore CRPMEM CORSE had requested membership and the Secretariat is awaiting recognition from the French Ministry.

Where payment of 2012 membership fees is concerned, the Executive Secretary informed the meeting that all payments had been received, including that from the Maltese association.

Agenda item 8: Any other matters

The Chair passed the floor to the FNCP representative who suggested that the Executive Committee should draft a letter to Mrs Damanaki, as occurred in 2010, in order to report the attack carried out by Greenpeace on a Spanish fishing vessel. On 17th October, off the coast of Tarragona, the vessel “Xarinola” was attacked by three Greenpeace inflatable boats while legally engaged in fishing operations, jeopardizing the safety of the crew. The OCEANA representative intervened to express her opposition to the motion proposed by FNCP as it is not part of the RAC MED mandate. The GKTS representative strongly disagreed with the position taken by OCEANA and expressed



support for the proposal made by FNCP. In conclusion FNCCP intervened and informed the Meeting that the Spanish ministry had also condemned the incident.

The representative of Big Game Italia took the floor and stated that, in his opinion, the organization of the Meeting's discussion was not appropriate for an Executive Committee, he further proposed that a procedure should be set up to formalize collaboration with the GFCM.

The meeting ended at 13.46, later than expected, and therefore it was not possible to include the WWF's intervention which was postponed until the next meeting. No further matters were put forward for discussion and so the Chair thanked the participants and the interpreters and closed the meeting.

