



Vision for the Malta MedFish4Ever Declaration and the measures to implement Speech of the Chairman of the MEDAC, 30th March 2017

The Mediterranean Advisory Council, in representation of all the participating stakeholders, representatives of professional and recreational fisheries, workers' unions, NGOs and the other interested parties within the sector from the eight EU member states, express profound satisfaction for what is happening in Malta today, a day which will become a milestone in the history of the Mediterranean, with the commitment of several governments to achieve common objectives.

In July 2015, in view of the worrying data on the state of stocks, when the MEDAC approached the EC expressing the desire to see specific initiatives aiming to invert the trend and accelerate the process towards full environmental, social and economic sustainability of Mediterranean fisheries, Commissioner Vella immediately gave his full commitment, but the MEDAC had not dared hope to see this happening in such a short time, with the launch of the Catania process, the Brussels conference and today the Malta declaration.

This is a declaration that has special value and significant implications, and which, as a response to the array of concerns expressed by the various different EU stakeholders, brings together the engagement of the coastal governments, the multilateral agencies and the European institutions to deal with the wider issues at stake for the future of the Mediterranean.

To begin with, the MEDAC agrees with the need for new governance for Mediterranean fisheries, based on common aims and principles, and as such the MEDAC is extremely pleased to welcome the stakeholders' desire to be involved and to empower fishers in view of participatory fisheries management.

The need to promote a culture of compliance, strengthening scientific knowledge and extending it to recreational fisheries, the fight against illegal fisheries, the integration of the socio-economic dimension, the adoption of an ecosystem approach, recognition of the importance of small-scale fisheries and the consideration of the effects of pollution and other external factors on the state of stocks are all issues that are highlighted in the many documents produced by our Advisory Council and which today are described within the aims and principles of the Malta declaration.

The five actions that make up the commitment of the governments undersigning the document, and the coordination of the developments entrusted to the GFCM, together form a basis which we can reasonably hope is more solid than that produced by the solemn declarations of the past, and for us it is a source of inspiration to boost our commitment in carrying out our role, which is that of supporting the European decision-making process.

In this framework, through our Working Groups we hope to develop opinions and proposals that enhance the value of the process: on the one hand they represent a synthesis, reconciling the different interests of the various parties with full awareness of their individual positions, on the other hand they offer the possibility to achieve real management with the sector operators understanding and agreeing with the regulations in force, which is a key factor in the success of any fisheries policy, but which in the past has too often been entrusted to a "command and control" system with limits and failures where its application is concerned.

Serious consideration of the socio-economic aspects, from impact assessment to the monitoring of the effects of measures, is of fundamental importance in the definition of measures and of





support instruments that may prove necessary. Equally essential is a complete, correct assessment of the effects of formulas that are new to the Mediterranean, which should be observed according to an appropriate time scale which is sufficient to produce results, also taking into account the different resilience levels of the species covered by the management plans.

Flexible, adaptive management, gradual implementation of measures, understanding that fishing enterprises need to plan economic activities involving investment, management and employment, as well as careful assessment of trends in the state of key target stocks and an analysis of environmental conditions, are all aspects to be considered when working on the complex issues that are central to the Malta declaration, aspects that must all be carefully considered in the definition and use of a new tool box with which to move out of the emergency situation, without oversimplifying, learning lessons from past mistakes and looking for more efficient management models for the future.

In this, Commissioner Vella, honorable Ministers, the MEDAC is by your side.

