



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



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

Statement by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean of the FAO to the 24th Regular Meeting of the ICCAT

At the outset I would like to express to you my sincere gratitude for the invitation to attend the 24th Regular Meeting of the ICCAT. I have been participating in sessions of the Commission for many years and I am always pleased to join you and have the opportunity to represent the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean of the FAO (GFCM) in this important forum.

As you are aware of, GFCM and ICCAT are geographically linked, in that both organizations have an institutional mandate on the Mediterranean Sea and currently there are only four Contracting Parties to the GFCM which are not Contracting Parties to the ICCAT. This is the reason why cooperation has been actively pursued and several areas of our work are indeed shared. As an instance, I would like to highlight in particular the fight against IUU fishing in the Mediterranean Sea. There are fishing vessels that appear both in the record of vessels of ICCAT and that of the GFCM. In addition, there is a set of ICCAT recommendations which have been endorsed by the GFCM and are now included in the Compendium of GFCM decisions. These are just examples, as there are numerous areas for cooperation.

Regardless, we are witnessing an unprecedented focus on partnerships as tools in support of a better governance of natural resources. Within FAO in particular, there is a clear policy, which encourages the signature of agreements between organizations having similar objectives in order to promote coordination and synergies. When it comes to the cooperation between GFCM and ICCAT, I do believe that it is high time to capitalize on past efforts and formalize our interactions through the adoption of a memorandum of understanding. In this regard, I would like to inform you that a similar call was already made within the remit of the GFCM and I have personally encouraged those Contracting Parties which participate in both RFMOs to actively support this proposal in ICCAT as well.

A memorandum of understanding would surely help us to identify activities to be undertaken under relevant areas of cooperation including, the issue of IUU fishing I previously mentioned. In this respect, I would like to refer to the statement by my colleagues in FAO mentioning the ongoing process aiming at the declaration of an international day for the fight against IUU fishing. Should this proposal be eventually presented to COFI and favourably considered, all RFMOs will be concerned by such an initiative. ICCAT's support for such an initiative would hence be essential.

I thank you very much for your attention and I wish you a fruitful meeting,

Abdellah Srour
GFCM Executive Secretary