



Mediterranean and Black Sea governments, international organizations, scientists, NGOs, fishers and fishers' communities join forces for the future of small-scale fisheries and marine resources

St Julian's, Malta – Over 170 participants from all fisheries actors of the Mediterranean and Black Sea have just met in St Julian's, Malta, to share experiences and make steps towards a sustainable future for small-scale fisheries in the region. Discussions have laid the groundwork for a regional project fostering knowledge of all the components linked to small-scale fisheries and involving all interested stakeholders and have led to a collaboration agreement signed between fishers from the Northern and Southern Mediterranean shores. It is the first time ever that such a platform is created to enable cooperation between fishers from both sides of the Mediterranean.

“It is a first, and I have to say that the results of the meeting are beyond our expectations, said Abdellah Srour, Executive Secretary of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). Everybody showed an incredible level of attention and interest, we have clearly seen that we are all sharing the same concerns and vision, from fishers to governments. There is a genuine and widespread interest in ensuring a future for small-scale fisheries in the region”.

The First Regional Symposium on sustainable small-scale fisheries gathered participants from Albania, Algeria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Mauritania, Montenegro, Morocco, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, as well as representatives of the European Union, international and intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, professionals and experts from all over the world.

“It is of paramount importance to dedicate the efforts required so that together we can face the increasing challenges that this sector is battling on a daily basis” said in his opening speech Hon. Leo Brincat, Minister for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change of Malta.

The Mediterranean and Black Sea fishing fleets are made of about 90 000 vessels and the small-scale segment represents more than 80 percent of the entire fleet*. Small-scale fisheries include a great number of fishing techniques and use over 50 types of fishing gears to adapt to target species according to the fishing season.

Despite their socio-economic importance, small-scale fisheries do not always benefit from the attention they deserve. “It often happens that we walk many times through the same place without seeing it. The same occurs to small-scale fisheries: they are so obvious that they cannot be seen” said H.E. Sid Ahmed Ferroukhi, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources of Algeria, who attended the whole symposium.

Small-scale fishworkers are often excluded from public policy processes and decision-making, they face difficulties in exploiting resources that are depleting and there is a lack of an integrated vision of the

management of the sector. Moreover, issues related to the welfare of small-scale fishers and their communities, their social protection and safety are insufficiently addressed and little is known about these aspects.

“It is the first time that small-scale fishers are invited to the meeting of a regional fisheries management organization. This is a great opportunity for us to meet, discuss and find solutions together, declared Chabou Mohammed Bachir, President of the Moroccan Federation of Fishermen. Without small scale fishers there is no future for fisheries in the Mediterranean”.

The main conclusions of the symposium include: the establishment of a Task Force aimed at supporting Mediterranean and Black Sea countries in the implementation of the *Voluntary Guidelines for securing sustainable fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication* facilitated by FAO; the launch a regional project fostering knowledge on small-scale fisheries; the organization of a second Regional Symposium on small-scale fisheries; the need to integrate small-scale fisheries in marine protected areas; support to co-managed fisheries and the promotion of a strategy underpinning the valorization of opportunities and products of small-scale fisheries for the benefit of local communities and stakeholders.

The event was marked by the signature of the Malta Commitment to establish a cooperation platform at the regional and sub-regional level. “Discussing between fishers from both Mediterranean shores, we have realized that our ideas, our vision and our interests were just the same” said Ramon Tarridas, President of the Mediterranean Platform of Artisanal Fishers (MedArtNet).

*source: GFCM data

Notes to editors:

The First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea was organised in Malta, from 27 to 30 November 2013, in partnership with CIHEAM Bari, the FAO Fisheries Department and FAO regional projects (AdriaMed, CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed), MedPAN, WWF Mediterranean Programme and in collaboration with the Government of Malta.



The symposium participants ©GFCM



The historic Malta Commitment between fishers from the Northern and Southern Mediterranean shores
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