

## THE STRATEGY

### Genesis

For millennia, fisheries and aquaculture have driven the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, providing essential coastal livelihoods and the basis for the so-called “Mediterranean diet.” Feeding and providing livelihoods for an exponentially expanding world population, while striving to reduce inequality and support gender equity, represent the main challenges of our era and the ultimate targets of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, maintaining high levels of sustainable yield and providing for livelihoods remains a particularly tall order. The countries of the region are characterized by densely populated coastal areas and are among the countries of the world with the highest demand for fish protein. Together, these factors impose intense pressure on Mediterranean and Black Sea ecosystems, which already face unique challenges due to their semi-enclosed nature and little connection to other oceans.

Recognition of these challenges at the global and local scale impelled countries and international organizations to act, revising existing strategies and creating new ones when needed. In this context, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and all its members have stepped up to the task of reversing the concerning trends in natural resources seen in the region. In response to the advice of externally conducted performance reviews, the most recent of which was completed in 2019, the GFCM has adapted its institutional framework to represent a more modern and agile Commission better able to respond to the challenges facing the region. These amendments also prompted the adoption of the mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, which included ambitious targets to improve scientific knowledge and data collection on the most pressing issues facing the region’s fisheries and facilitate the adoption of effective management measures. Acknowledging the major role that aquaculture is called to play in achieving food security in the region and the need to address the sustainability challenges posed by its rapid growth, the GFCM also adopted a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture. By facilitating cooperative processes and fostering synergies, the aquaculture strategy should help the sector deliver its full potential by 2030.

### Where are we now?

The fisheries and aquaculture strategies acted as driving forces behind high-level political commitments taken in the region, notably the MedFish4Ever Declaration signed in 2017 and the Sofia Declaration signed in 2018, and accelerated progress by CPCs in meeting the political commitments enshrined in these declarations. Both strategies proved to be efficient tools for translating these political commitments into concrete action and galvanized interventions in the region.

#### *Fisheries science and management*

Bending the curve of increasing overexploitation of fishery resources and addressing biodiversity has been the main focus of the GFCM across its area of application. This was addressed under Targets 1 “Reverse the declining trend of fish stocks through strengthened scientific advice in support of management” and Target 4 “Minimize and mitigate unwanted interactions between fisheries and marine ecosystems and environment” of the fisheries mid-term strategy.

The significant increases in the quality and quantity of available information and fisheries data has driven the adoption of more and better management efforts at the local, subregional and regional levels. In recent years, the GFCM has adopted 10 management plans aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of fishing activities and six decisions addressing conservation issues. It has made important strides to increase spatial management capabilities thanks to the creation of nine fisheries restricted areas (FRAs) such as the Jabuka Pomo Pit FRA, often mentioned as a virtuous example. On the other hand, the GFCM has ramped up efforts to ensure management advice is based on accurate, timely and comprehensive information, by carrying out surveys at sea, launching large-scale research programmes, improving onboard monitoring through a dedicated bycatch and discards monitoring programme and launching the first pilot studies on mitigation measures. In this regard, the organization of events such as the Forum on fisheries science in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (Fish Forum), held in 2018, has contributed to boosting the science-policy interface and fostering cooperation and exchange.

As a result of these efforts, and although much still remains to be done, there are promising signs showing that active management makes a difference: the GFCM has begun to reverse the prevailing trend of overexploitation in the region, with an increase of more than 10 percent in the share of stocks that are sustainably exploited and a reduction of more than 15 percent in exploitation ratios, along with a rise in overall stock biomass.

#### *Socio-economic dimension*

Hand-in-hand with management, the fisheries strategy has underlined the essential social dimension of the sector in the region. Under its Targets 1 "Reverse the declining trend of fish stocks through strengthened scientific advice in support of management" and Target 2 "Support livelihoods for coastal communities through sustainable small-scale fisheries", the strategy has accelerated the work of CPCs to promote sustainable livelihoods in the fisheries sector, in line with the principles and objectives of the MedFish4Ever Declaration and the Sofia Declaration, which uphold the further integration of the socio-economic dimension in fisheries management, capitalizing on the Blue Economy to promote growth, jobs and investment, as well as a sustainable small-scale fisheries sector. Furthermore, these efforts have advanced the implementation of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) in the region.

Recognizing the particular importance of small-scale fisheries to Mediterranean and Black Sea coastal communities and livelihoods, a ten-year Regional Plan of action for Small-Scale Fisheries (RPOA-SSF) was adopted in 2018 as a political commitment toward long-term sustainability. To advancing its implementation, dedicated activities such as the SSF University were launched. The creation of cooperation platforms such as the Friends of SSF platform also enabled to address interdisciplinary issues, such as access to social protection, and build synergies among the ongoing work of regional stakeholders. In addition, to support its conservation and management interventions, the GFCM has underscored the contribution of fisheries to social development by improving socio-economic data collection and drawing attention to social protection as a mean to strengthen the resilience of coastal communities. In this respect, socio-economic surveys were launched in eight CPCs and recreational fisheries pilot studies were executed in all GFCM subregions.

#### *Compliance and enforcement*

Adopting management decisions is only half the battle: the decisions also need to be enforced. This need was addressed by Target 3 "Curb illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing through a regional plan of action" of the fisheries mid-term strategy.

Over the past years, the GFCM has strengthened its legal framework and capacity to ensure compliance in the region, through high-seas joint inspection schemes and the piloting of a centralized vessel monitoring system. At the global level, the GFCM has also played a key role in drawing attention to the need to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. As a result, a Regional Plan of Action to Fight against IUU Fishing (RPOA-IUU) was adopted in 2017, operationalizing at the technical level the political commitments under the MedFish4Ever Declaration and the Sofia Declaration. Moreover, upon an initiative from the GFCM, an international day for the fight against IUU fishing is now celebrated around the world.

### *Aquaculture*

The vision for an aquaculture sector that is more competitive, sustainable, productive, profitable and equitable is enshrined in the GFCM aquaculture strategy and its three targets: Target 1 “Build an efficient regulatory and administrative framework to secure sustainable aquaculture development”, Target 2 “Enhance interactions between aquaculture and the environment while ensuring animal health and welfare” and Target 3 “facilitate market-oriented aquaculture and enhance public perception”.

Considering the growing importance and potential of aquaculture in the region, effective support was provided and led to the adoption of specific national strategies and development plans for aquaculture, which are now in place in more than 85 percent of CPCs. In addition, capacity development efforts were made towards the establishment and effective implementation of dedicated zones for aquaculture and more than 70 percent of CPCs now have specific provisions in place on allocated zones for aquaculture or aquaculture zoning within their national aquaculture strategies. Thanks to a strong network of producer organizations in the region, cooperation among stakeholders produced fruitful results, in particular through the establishment of several multi-stakeholder platforms at CPC level, promoting the participatory approach. Great strides were also made in sharing aquaculture knowledge and know-how. The GFCM Aquaculture Demonstrative Centres play an essential role in this knowledge-sharing: two centres are now established and in operation in the Black Sea and two more are planned to be created in the Mediterranean too. Other advances for the sector include promoting market-oriented production and social acceptability and highlighting the environmental services of aquaculture.

### *Adapting to emerging priorities*

Capacity development has been a key priority in both the fisheries strategy, in particular its Target 5 “Enhance capacity-building and cooperation” and the aquaculture strategy, where capacity development and cooperation are a cross-cutting aspect in the three targets.

In parallel to the progress made on technical fronts throughout the implementation of its fisheries and aquaculture strategies, the GFCM has evolved to become a more modern organization, better able to adapt to and address emerging challenges and priorities in the region. The subregional approach adopted has been instrumental in addressing the specificities of each of its five subregions (western, central and eastern Mediterranean, Adriatic Sea and Black Sea); it is supported by technical units that are currently in operation in Bulgaria, Lebanon and Spain, soon to be followed by Tunisia and Croatia. Cooperation and partnerships with stakeholders have also accelerated, with the conclusion of 17 memoranda of understanding, and strategic activities have been promoted through specific projects supported by extra-budgetary funds. In addition, the GFCM can now count on a consolidated network of expert brought about by research programmes and by initiatives such as the Fish Forum 2018 or the Aquaculture Demonstrative Centres. Finally, better preparedness has boosted the ability of the Commission and its Secretariat to meet and adapt to rapidly changing circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **New challenges call for a new strategy**

These achievements show that progress has been made in the right direction, but many challenges remain before Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture can be assured of a sustainable future while contributing to their full potential to the Blue Economy. Catch is lower than in the 1980s, exploitation rates are mostly still high, management plans need to be extended, discards and bycatch must be reduced, aquaculture production needs to meet demand and grow sustainably and an ageing fleet and workforce require greater social support. Thanks to the close attention the GFCM pays to all these issues, it is possible to build on the momentum and decisively move forward to address them.

In 2020, discussions were launched and the adoption of a new common vision and guiding principles emerged as the main course to consolidate the progress made so far, deliver on the commitments made and accelerate common efforts to promote the sustainability of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea in the face of climate change and increasing human pressures on the marine environment. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted business as usual and severely impacted the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, decisive action is all the more necessary to bolster their resilience. A new strategy can therefore play a central role in guiding this work and coordinating efforts among all actors to respond to the region's priorities and growing challenges.

### *A regional scope, a modular approach*

The strategy has a regional scope and addresses the priorities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea as a whole. Taking advantage of the GFCM's subregional approach that supports fisheries management and aquaculture development while better addressing local specificities, the actions of the strategy will be coordinated within the five GFCM subregions. More focused and tailored interventions to achieve each of the strategy's targets will be key to ensure efficient implementation and coordinated action while taking into account specific needs. In this respect, the GFCM technical units in the subregions will play a key role and act as decentralized hubs to organize local actions, involve necessary stakeholders, share subregional expertise and coordinate cooperation and technical assistance work.

### *Regional synergies and global commitments*

Bringing together different sectors of the Blue Economy and promoting a multidisciplinary approach, the new strategy will federate all efforts to deliver on national, regional and global commitments, working in synergy with existing national and regional strategies such as the European Union's Green Deal and the commitments subscribed under the Coalition for an Exemplary Mediterranean in 2030 spearheaded by France, Spain and the Principality of Monaco, including the action plan "The Mediterranean: a model sea by 2030" currently under discussion.

Under a global perspective, the path to sustainability is marked by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. With just under ten years left to achieve the SDGs, the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) is of particular relevance to Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture as it offers an opportunity to join efforts in ensuring ocean science delivers benefits for the sustainable development of oceans and for society. The strategy can contribute to declining the Decade's objectives in the perspective of the Mediterranean and Black Sea specificities. The strategy will also advance collective efforts under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and contribute to its post-2020 global biodiversity framework, currently being negotiated.

As a United Nations specialized agency, FAO supports these global efforts. In particular, the quest for securing a productive and sustainable aquaculture to achieve food security is enshrined in FAO Strategic Objective 2 (SO 2) which is to “make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable” as well as in the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF), which also promotes sustainable fisheries and responsible aquaculture. Moreover, the FAO Blue Growth Initiative aims at addressing food security and poverty alleviation thanks to the production of quality capture and aquaculture fish through integrated, sustainable and socio-economically sensitive processes. In this respect, the recent Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, endorsed by the FAO Committee on Fisheries on 8 February 2021, is a renewed call for action to implement the 2030 Agenda and achieve the sustainable management of aquatic resources, in light of the critical importance of fisheries and aquaculture for global agrifood systems transformation. This vision is enshrined in the strategy and will guide its implementation.

### *Implementation and timeline*

In line with the global agenda, the strategy is proposed to cover a ten-year span and run until 2030. A mid-term review of its objectives and outcomes is foreseen in order to assess the progress made in implementing the strategy, review lessons learnt and provide recommendations on possible readjustments and improvements and ensure the targets will be met efficiently.

### *One vision, five targets*

To fulfill its overarching vision towards the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the strategy is articulated around five targets:

Target 1. Fisheries and ecosystems: healthy seas and productive fisheries

Target 2. Compliance and enforcement: a level playing field to eradicate illegal, unreported unregulated fishing

Target 3. Aquaculture: a sustainable and resilient sector growing to its full potential

Target 4. Livelihoods: decent employment and engaged fishers for profitable fisheries

Target 5. Capacity development: efficient technical assistance, knowledge sharing and partnerships in a subregional perspective

The technical knowledge and expertise in the region underpins all the actions while fully integrating cross-cutting themes such as gender, governance, nutrition and climate change.

## **TARGET 1. Fisheries and ecosystems**

### **Healthy seas and productive fisheries**

Building upon the work done so far and recognizing remaining challenges such as the still prevalent overexploitation of resources and the various threats to biodiversity in these semi-enclosed seas, Target 1 aims to address sustainability, conservation and environment issues in an integrated way, focussing on four priorities.

#### **1.1. Improve technical advice on the status of fisheries and potential scenarios to provide a solid basis for management**

This priority focusses on enhancing fisheries-related data collection, monitoring and analytical capacity towards the provision of solid advice to facilitate decision-making. It prioritizes on stock assessment and simulations on the biological and socio-economic impacts of alternative management scenarios, including a focus on data-limited situations, the inclusion of small-scale fisheries as well as the use of multispecies approaches and integrated ecosystem assessments.

#### **1.2. Implement evidence-based adaptive fisheries and ecosystem management**

Building on transitional measures and management plans adopted under the mid-term strategy, this priority focusses on implementing efficient multiannual, adaptive management plans addressing all key fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. A combination of quantitative harvest control rules for data-rich stocks and precautionary measures for data-limited resources can enrich existing management plans as well as inform new ones, thereby guiding the management framework towards increased sustainability in the Mediterranean and Black Sea

#### **1.3. Strengthen the use of efficient area-based conservation measures and of technical and nature-based solutions to conserve biodiversity and enhance the productivity of marine living resources**

This priority focusses on the identification and implementation of new fisheries restricted areas (FRAs) and on enhancing the efficiency and monitoring of existing ones in order to address significant adverse impacts of fisheries on vulnerable marine species, ecosystems and essential fish habitats. It also addresses the use of other bycatch and impact reduction technical measures, such as those directed at improving fishing selectivity, deterring depredation and decreasing mortality of accidentally caught vulnerable species.

#### **1.4. Prevent, mitigate and address emerging threats to fisheries and the environment, including plastic pollution, climate change and the expansion of non-indigenous species**

This priority focusses on minimizing and mitigating any form of pollution deriving from the activity of the fishing sector, in particular abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear. It also seeks the involvement of the sector in testing new technologies to remove marine litter, in particular plastics, from the marine environment. In addition, it also aims to build on the work on climate change and non-indigenous species initiated during the previous strategy, by consolidating monitoring programmes such as the observatory for non-indigenous species, improving initial assessments of potential impacts of these threats on the sector and implementing adaptive measures within existing and new management plans.

## **TARGET 2. Compliance and enforcement**

### **A level playing field to eradicate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing**

Building upon the results obtained so far and with the aim to further operationalize the RPOA-IUU, Target 2 technically underpins political commitments put forth by the MedFish4Ever Declaration and the Sofia Declaration. Its execution will be guided by the overarching principles of transparency and fairness and it should prove instrumental in swiftly ending IUU fishing practices in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea focussing on four priorities.

#### **2.1. Achieve full compliance with GFCM recommendations**

This priority focusses on endowing the GFCM Compliance Committee with the necessary means to level the playing field in the GFCM area of application. Under the mid-term strategy, the GFCM has adopted an unprecedented number of management measures and provided technical assistance to help contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) in addressing situations of non-compliance detected by the Compliance Committee. Although some work is still needed to achieve a level playing field, the root causes undermining such crucial endeavour are now clear; this will be addressed under this priority.

#### **2.2. Consolidate a common system of enforcement**

This priority focusses on building upon the progress made in the context of the GFCM's subregional management plans to enforce fisheries regulations. The mid-term strategy jump-started efforts by the GFCM towards a common methodology to regularly assess the extent and impacts of IUU fishing. Bearing in mind the high cost of enforcement measures, it will not be possible, without such a methodology, to identify where the main risks of illegal activities are likely to occur and deploy means to reduce those risks in critical marine areas. This priority addresses these issues and facilitates the implementation of a common system of enforcement.

#### **2.3. Centralise monitoring, control and surveillance at the regional level**

This priority allows CPCs to follow up on the decision they took to establish a centralised regional VMS and control system under the remit of the GFCM. The mid-term strategy laid the ground for such system by piloting the testing of key technical features which will be needed to set it up while ensuring full correspondence with national VMS already in place. At the same time, the prevalence of SSF in the GFCM area of application as well as most recent advances on technology call for integrating into this system tracking solutions that would allow the broadening of monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) on a modular basis. There is also a growing need to monitor the presence of fishing vessels operating inside or in the proximity of FRAs and to use spatio-temporal data for the purpose of the scientific assessment of fish stocks. The possibility exists to now capitalize on the establishment of a centralised regional VMS and controls system thereby reaping additional benefits for CPCs.

#### **2.4. Bolster coordination to address illegal practices related to the fishery sector**

This priority addresses of the main gaps identified throughout the implementation of the mid-term strategy in relation to the consequences of IUU fishing activities. While the mid-term strategy has recognized

the importance of only allowing access to the market to legally caught fishery products, the extent of action taken in this respect has remained limited. The culture of compliance promoted by the GFCM could be severely hampered if decisive action is not taken. Much has been done in terms of regulating harvesting activities in the region. Tackling the equally important aspect of regulating what goes down where harvested catch ends (from bait to plate) should be the next step. On the occasion of the 2019 “GFCM High-Level Conference on MedFish4Ever Initiatives: Advances and Renewed Commitments”, the importance of certification, traceability and the market dimension of the fisheries sector was stressed. Creating working connections in the context of interagency coordination in this regard will be achieved under this priority.



## **TARGET 3. Aquaculture**

### **A sustainable and resilient sector growing to its full potential**

Build upon the achievements reached so far, Target 3 will ensure the sustainable development of the aquaculture sector, working towards its resilience against global challenges and crises such as climate change, plastic pollution and the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims at establishing an investor-friendly environment while reinforcing the integration of aquaculture into coastal zones and ensuring responsible environmental and social practices. Promoting policies that support and recognize the contribution of small-scale farmers, women and youth in blue food production contribute to advancing the sector towards consistent economic, environmental and social standards throughout the region. Providing CPCs and stakeholders with the best available knowledge through cutting-edge information technologies and data analysis techniques will allow to promote a market-driven, competitive and innovative approach. Promoting the responsible development of the sector within transboundary aquatic ecosystems and in accordance with the CCRF will enable marine and inland aquaculture to grow towards its full potential in the region, through four priorities.

#### **3.1. Support responsible investment**

This priority focusses on creating enabling conditions to attract investors that look beyond short-term financial return and take a responsible stance on the overall impact, including environmental and social aspects of their investment. The GFCM will continue to work closely with CPCs towards a regulatory and administrative framework that efficiently accommodates development and promotes sustainable blue economy finance principles, based on responsible production and due diligence.

#### **3.2. Promote practices supporting healthy environment, products and sector**

This priority focusses on transforming the aquaculture industry through science-based solutions and marine spatial planning (MSP) tools and in line with the ecosystem approach to aquaculture (EAA). Amongst the best practices to be promoted, innovation, certification, traceability and nature-based solutions should have a critical role. Improving the sector's footprint, dealing with climate change and pollution and securing animal health and welfare will be crucial towards achieving the sustainability of the sector.

#### **3.3. Improve the perception of aquaculture**

This priority will ensure the competitiveness, resilience and social acceptability of the sector. The aim is to promote a sector which, beyond food security in the region, provides consumers with an easy, affordable choice of healthy and sustainable proteins. The GFCM will continue building on its existing excellent collaboration with producer organizations and relevant stakeholders, including to enhance the image of aquaculture and its products. Awareness of seafood health benefits, certifications, and new business solutions and opportunities will play a pivotal role. Furthermore, this priority shall seek to ensure that the sector is fair and inclusive, providing the necessary opportunities to small scale farmers in the supply chain, as well as supporting the empowerment of women and youth, thus further transforming the industry and leaving no one behind.

### **3.4. Capitalize on technology and information systems**

This priority aims at providing CPCs, producers, stakeholder platforms and other relevant institutions with all the necessary tools and information on aquaculture production, trade and markets. This will be achieved through the overall modernization of data collection, analysis and dissemination processes with the use of modern information technologies. A sustainable, market-oriented sector requires sound and up-to-date information for decision making, capitalizing on innovative, flexible and affordable technologies – a key factor for delivering quality-controlled data and products. The Aquaculture Market Observatory to be established by the GFCM will play a central role in this respect, acting as a data and information hub for aquaculture stakeholders in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region.

## **TARGET 4. Livelihoods**

### **Decent employment and engaged fishers towards profitable fisheries**

Building upon the work done and recognizing the importance of promoting resilient fisheries-based livelihoods while continuing to implement the RPOA-SSF, Target 4 aims to address issues such as employment, socio-economic knowledge, value chains and participatory decision-making in an integrated way, through four priorities

#### **4.1. Support productive and resilient employment along the fisheries value chain**

This priority focusses on enhancing sustainable livelihoods by fostering decent working conditions, including health and safety standards in the workplace, and productive employment opportunities for men and women in the fisheries sector, particularly young people. Access to social protection programmes and financial services will be promoted as a central component, supporting the resilience of fishers and enhancing their capacity to prepare for and respond to crises such as the one triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as climate change, among others. Finally, linkages with other Blue Economy sectors will be encouraged to promote livelihood diversification.

#### **4.2. Enhance the socio-economic information supporting decision-making processes**

This priority focusses on strengthening the understanding of the socio-economic impact of fisheries, including recreational fisheries, along the value chain. Socio-economic data collection and analysis will be enhanced, so as to better integrate this information into decision-making processes. This priority will also shed light on the role of women in fisheries, including in gleaning activities and pre- and post-harvest activities.

#### **4.3. Foster dynamic and innovative fisheries value chains**

This priority focusses on identifying and implementing innovative solutions to enhance the profitability of fisheries, making value chains more efficient and responsive to market demand, while ensuring food security and ready access to fresh, local products. Actions will promote innovation to facilitate sustainable direct selling initiatives, minimize food waste, enhance traceability, promote certification, heighten consumer awareness and improve the integration of fisheries in a circular economy.

#### **4.4. Foster the active engagement of fishers in participatory management processes and facilitate their role as guardians of the sea**

This priority focusses on enhancing the capacity of producer organizations, notably small-scale fisher organizations, to engage as active contributors in management through a participatory process. In particular, efforts will be made to integrate fishers into knowledge-building activities, capturing their Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK), empowering them to advocate for their needs through management consultations and partnering with them to institute co-management models.

## **TARGET 5. Capacity development**

### **Technical cooperation, knowledge sharing and efficient partnerships in a subregional perspective**

Building upon the work and achievements under the mid-term strategy, including the outcomes of the Fish Forum 2018, and capitalizing on previous technical assistance work carried out through the relevant FAO regional projects, Target 5 aims to continue providing capacity development support to coastal countries, including by empowering the GFCM technical units in the subregions in order to ensure that commitments under the MedFish4Ever Declaration and the Sofia Declaration are met. The execution of activities under this Target will be guided by the overarching principle of solidarity and be underpinned by broad and inclusive partnerships through three priorities.

#### **5.1. Streamline capacity development at the subregional level**

This priority focusses on tailoring the capacity development to the specificities of the different GFCM subregions and assisting CPCs to fulfill the untapped potential of their fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Through the establishment of its technical units, the GFCM has set in motion a process that should ultimately deliver on-the-ground technical and scientific support adapted to the different needs of each subregion. Specific focus will be placed on the role of education and human development in the field of fisheries and aquaculture, including for women and young people, and on promoting innovation and research in marine technology.

#### **5.2. Promote technical cooperation and boost scientific research and innovation**

This priority capitalizes on the experience mustered through the launching of research applied programmes and the consolidation of existing scientific networks. It will benefit from the knowledge harnessed in the wider community of scientists and stakeholders working in fisheries, aquaculture and the conservation of marine ecosystems throughout the Mediterranean and Black Sea region so as to address gaps in knowledge on specific cross-cutting themes. It will thereby accelerate innovation in the fishing and aquaculture sectors, including through cost-efficient interventions that improve livelihoods and competitiveness.

#### **5.3. Enhance the role of partnerships in fisheries and aquaculture from a blue economy perspective**

This priority focusses on expanding strategic cooperation between the GFCM and its current and potential partners, from countries to international organizations and programmes, academia and research institutions, civil society organizations, professional associations and cooperatives and the private sector. This priority will seek to boost the progressive integration of fisheries and aquaculture into a wider blue economy outlook, by building crosscutting alliances addressing common environmental, economic and social priorities. It will also support GFCM's participation and involvement in relevant global fora and international events to ensure a committed response to calls and policies adopted at the international level towards meeting agreed goals and targets (such as SDG, the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the UN Decade for Oceans, etc.).