FOR A NEW COMMON FISHERIES POLICY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND EUROPE

BACKGROUND

Based on the results of the public consultations carried out over the last two years, the European Commission rejected any short-term revision scenario of the CFP and invited Member States, fisheries stakeholders and the scientific community to join the "Pact for Fisheries and Oceans" in order to fully implement the current CFP and to contribute to the necessary reflections and evaluations of certain elements of it.

The sectoral initiatives presented in the non-legislative package open up a new strategic phase in the political and technical debate on the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy and its future prospects. It is important that the member regions of the CPMR-IMC mobilise to become an integral part of the new governance to come, in order to facilitate the identification of areas of work for the lobbying actions to be carried out, starting with the review of the CFP.

DECLARATION ON THE FUTURE OF FISHING IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

In the Mediterranean, the fishing fleet has shrunk by more than 50% (in terms of units and power) over the last 15 years, and the sector is on the verge of losing the minimum critical mass needed to preserve it as a major pillar of the blue economy. Trawlers, which represent the cornerstone of the fishing economy, accounting for 80% of landings by volume and 70% by value, are now being severely affected and unfairly stigmatised.

In this context, and following various exchanges between its members, the IMC General Assembly:

A. **Recalls** that the Regions are major institutional players in the implementation of the CFP and must, as such, be included at their rightful level of representation in the governance and co-production of future achievements (“Fishers for the Future”, “socio-economic indicators”) as well as in their valorisation.

The creation of informal bodies for coordination and/or consultation not regulated by the Common Fisheries Policy (the pact for Oceans and fisher, the special group to support Member States in the implementation of the new EC’s action plan, the European Partnerships for energy transition, etc.) may in time raise questions about the level of representation of the Regions and their capacity to mobilise on subjects of major importance for the future of Mediterranean fisheries.

B. **Welcomes** all the proposals made by the European Commission on the priority issue of decarbonising the fishing fleet: creation of a new multi-stakeholder partnership for energy transition, living laboratories, cooperation with the European Investment Bank.

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1 In Occitanie, 25% of the trawler fleet will be scrapped by 2023 as part of the Fleet Exit Plans (FEP).
Nevertheless, to speed up the decarbonisation process and make it accessible to all fishing fleets in the Mediterranean and Europe, calls for a short-term review of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), including the creation of a decarbonisation capacity, not counted as a tonnage contributing to the increase in fishing capacity. In this regard, it recalls that the Council invited the Commission to reform the calculation of the fishing capacity of MS’s fleets, while excluding the additional tonnage dedicated.

It calls therefore for the possibility of encouraging the modernisation and replacement of the fishing fleet in segments with overcapacity in return for a reduction in fishing capacity. If this cannot be envisaged as part of a revision of the CFP in the short term, the suspension of the application of the CFP for 3 to 5 years (moratorium) could be considered in order to allow all fishing boats to modernise thanks to public aid from the Member States and associated Regions.

Also requests that, in addition to an adjusted regulatory framework, the European Commission should also provide financial support to the industry by modifying the conditions of the European Maritime Affairs, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) or by creating a transitional "decarbonisation" fund that can be replenished by the Member States, the Regions and any private partners. Decarbonisation is an issue in its own right and should not come up against any legal obstacles. The challenge is to fish better, not to fish more!

It is only by reaching these conditions that the Mediterranean and European fishing industry will be able to face the current energy crisis and contribute to the EU’s objective of CO₂ emissions reduction and to a "clean" sea.

C. Considers it necessary, in direct application of the above proposal to revise the CFP, to decouple the two indicators, power (kW) and gross tonnage (GT), from the fishing opportunities available (Amendment from Occitanie).

The introduction of new management mechanisms based on the limitation of fishing days, the maximum quantities of fish of a given species that may be harvested (TACs), the regulation of the size and technical characteristics of fishing gears and the increase in gear selectivity, fully justifies the possibility of broadening the indicators to be considered. Thus, the power (kW) and gross tonnage (GT) of fishing vessels should be treated simply as two more elements of the whole new concept of fishing effort and should be on the same level as indicators such as quotas (TACs), fishing days, gear dimensions, lengths or hourly limits. Such a conceptual change would make it possible to regulate fishing capacity more realistically in line with the specificities of each fleet.

D. Shares the objective of strengthening the environmental approach of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and welcomes the European Commission’s recognition of the impact of external factors such as contaminants, eutrophication, acidification and sea warming on fish mortality.

At the same time, is concerned about the sustainability of the fishing industry in the Mediterranean, particularly the trawler fleet, which is being undermined by non-legislative texts and a series of proposals aimed at banning its activity in protected marine areas.

Welcomes the Presidency Conclusions on the Fisheries policy package for a sustainable, resilient and competitive fisheries and aquaculture sector. Backs the request made by Member States to the European Commission to deliver a comprehensive impact assessment of the

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2 Council of the European Union, 11053/23, of 2023 June 26, Point 72.
3 Council of the European Union, 11053/23, of 2023 June 26, Point 39.
action plan\textsuperscript{4} based on the best available science as a basis for the operational and proportional applicability of the proposed actions and their implementation periods.

Points out that a ban on bottom trawling in protected marine areas would have a very big impact on the social and economic fabric and on food security and quality in maritime regions, both in the short and long term. Recalls that food security cannot be achieved solely through the development of industrial aquaculture.

Calls for Mediterranean Member States to be exempted from the implementation of the current Action Plan whose measures and timeline would jeopardise the economic viability of the Mediterranean fleet of bottom trawling.

Recalls that reaching the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY), as set by the WestMedMAP, and cooperating to rebuild fish stocks in the Mediterranean is a shared objective with regional authorities and fishers.

Points out, however, that the deadline set at 1 January 2025 for achieving the MSY, is unachievable (scientific consensus). It is proposed that this deadline be extended to 2030.

This new deadline should incorporate a necessary slowdown in the current timeline of management measures that have a socio-economic impact on the sector.

E. Backs the request\textsuperscript{5} of the Council to the EC to start an evaluation on the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of the current legislation on the landing obligation, as soon as possible, making use of the extensive research information and data made available by Mediterranean MSs and stakeholders.

F. Calls on the European Commission to step up efforts on the "selectivity of fishing gear" aspect in order to move towards sustainable fishing.

Improving the selectivity of fishing gear must take into account the mixing of target species, particularly in mixed fisheries, the long-term gains as well as the transitional consequences in social and economic terms. Without transitional social and economic measures, "gear selectivity" cannot be implemented, otherwise it will further destructure the industry.

\textsuperscript{4} COM (2023) 102 final
\textsuperscript{5} Council of the European Union, 11053/23, of 2023 June 26, Point 46.
The CPMR Intermediterranean Commission gathers around 40 Member Regions from 8 different EU member states and other countries: Albania, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Morocco, and Spain. It is open to all the different sub-national levels in all Mediterranean countries.

The gathering of the Intermediterranean Commission Members Regions represents a bond of peace, stability and development between three continents, Europe, Africa and Asia.

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