

Black Sea countries pledge to promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture



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Following months of discussions, the European Commission and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) have secured today a 10-year pledge to rebuild the Black Sea fish stocks, protect the region's ecological and economic wealth and boost the development of sustainable Black Sea aquaculture.

The successful [Ministerial Conference](#) [2] co-organised by the GFCM and the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU Council resulted in an historic joint political declaration.

Commissioner **Karmenu Vella**, responsible for the Environment, Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, said: *"Today's declaration is a historic step towards more sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Black Sea. While I congratulate everybody on the signature, I also stress that the real success must be measured by its implementation. The journey ahead is long, but our experience shows that it is worth the effort. Sustainable exploitation of our seas goes hand in hand with more viable livelihoods for our fishermen and thriving coastal communities. We now have a detailed plan. Let's turn it into action."*

The Sofia Declaration was signed by Black Sea ministerial representatives, along the Black Sea coastline and beyond covering both riparian States but also non-riparian States with interest in aquaculture: Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, Moldova, Turkey, together with the European Commission.

The [Declaration](#) [3] is a practical example of the EU's strong efforts to promote sustainable fisheries through its neighbourhood policy and multilateral cooperation. It sets out a detailed work plan for the next 10 years, based on joint actions with ambitious but coherent and realistic targets.

The declaration is the follow-up of the [Bucharest Declaration](#) [4] from October 2016, transforming commitments into concrete actions with measurable deliverables on fighting illegal unreported and

unregulated fishing (IUU), improve data collection and science, improve fisheries management, and boost sustainable development of aquaculture.

It is the result of a European Commission strategy to establish a new dynamic in multilateral fisheries governance in the Black Sea through work done by the GFCM, on the basis of commonly agreed principles established in the [GFCM mid-term strategy 2017-2020](#) [5].

Background

Following the successful #MedFish4Ever Declaration signed in Malta in 2017, the Sofia Declaration in 2018 is completing at international level the coverage of these two crucial sea basins with the EU policy objectives for fisheries and aquaculture that are environmentally sustainable, contribute to food security and achieve economic, social and employment benefits.

Over 23,500 persons are directly employed on fishing vessels in the Black Sea, whilst many more indirect jobs depend on the fishing sector. At least 8,700 aquaculture farms, marine and freshwater, generate direct and indirect jobs to more than 39,000 people in this area.

The GFCM already from its 41st annual session delivered important results by adopting decisions – milestones for the sustainability of the fish stocks and the aquaculture.

The following parties were represented at the GFCM Sofia Ministerial Conference: European Commission, three Member States (Bulgaria, Greece, Romania), 7 third countries (Albania, Georgia, Serbia, Moldova, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine), FAO, European Parliament, European Fisheries Control Agency, EU Black Sea Advisory Council.

More information

[Bucharest Declaration](#) [4]

[GFCM](#) [2]

[MedFish4Ever Declaration](#) [6]



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[2] <http://www.fao.org/gfcm/meetings/blackseaconference2018/en>

[3] https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/sites/fisheries/files/docs/2018-06-07-sofia-declaration_en.pdf

[4] https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/high-level-conference-towards-enhanced-cooperation-black-sea-fisheries-and-aquaculture_en

[5] <http://www.fao.org/gfcm/activities/fisheries/mid-term-strategy>

[6] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-770_en.htm