

## Annexe 2

### Subcommittee on Marine Environment and Ecosystems (SCMEE)

Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

Málaga, May 10-12, 2004

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#### **3. Ecosystem based approach to fisheries, and updated information on mapping of essential fish habitats**

3.1 Document 5 dealt with the problems of applying the ecosystem approach to fisheries. There has been much discussion of this subject and the concept of the ecosystem approach is firmly embedded in many key international documents. However, this concept remains confusing and has yet to be implemented in practical terms. The ecosystem approach is really a societal concept, rather than a scientific one.

The ecosystem approach has different meanings to different people. To the politicians, it is an attitude or mind-set based on the principle that the broader environment must be considered when fishing is being regulated. To scientists, it is the process of setting and attaining ecosystem objectives, which involves setting indicators and reference points. To stakeholders, it is the goals themselves. The EU has firmly endorsed the ecosystem approach and is trying to apply it as part of a new environmental strategy and also, through the CFP (Common Fisheries Policy). A Marine Strategy, soon to be published, will set out new steps for achieving greater control involving all sectors. A new European Council Regulation 2371 aims at progressive implementation of the ecosystem approach. The new Regional Advisory Councils (RAC) may help to introduce a pragmatic version of the ecosystem approach. They are regionally based and involve stakeholders.

In the Mediterranean, RACs are a less satisfactory vehicle, as the fisheries are more diverse, and many states outside the EU share the same stocks. Here GFCM, through regional projects offers an alternative. The RACs and the GFCM will need the support of scientists. Research priorities have been identified. There is a need for better understanding of marine food webs and the need to set ecosystem objectives, indicators and reference points. A

pragmatic way of implementing the ecosystem approach is needed, which will set clear goals and adopt the necessary management measures.

In discussion two different views developed, there was a general agreement that pilot studies in particular regions were needed to define ecological indicators and indices, and try them out in practice. However, scientists stressed the lack of basic information and stressed the difficulties in setting simple indices.

**Recommendation:** The Subcommittee recommended that the development of ecosystem based management tools is best achieved through projects on a sub-regional scale