



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



General Fisheries
Commission for
the Mediterranean

IDENTIFYING OECMs IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BLACK SEA

E. Betulla MORELLO

Aurora NASTASI

Amber HIMES-CORNELL

Juan Francisco LECHUGA SÁNCHEZ

MEDAC WG3 APRIL 2024

GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN



The FAO regional fisheries management organization for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea



23 Contracting Parties and
6 Cooperating non-Contracting Parties
(Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, Jordan,
Moldova, Saudi Arabia, and Ukraine)

OBJECTIVES

Federate efforts of countries towards:

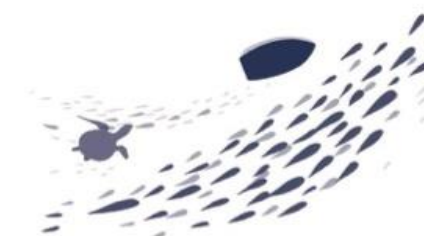
- the **conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources** at all levels (biological, social, economic and environmental)
- the **sustainable development of aquaculture**

GFCM 2030 STRATEGY

FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES
AND AQUACULTURE IN
THE MEDITERRANEAN
AND THE BLACK SEA

FIVE TARGETS, ONE VISION

The GFCM 2030 Strategy aims to preserve the heritage of fisheries and aquaculture as pillars for the livelihoods of Mediterranean and Black Sea coastal communities, ensuring their transformation into a productive and sustainable food system that contributes to thriving economies and healthy ecosystems. To fulfil its overarching sustainability vision, the GFCM 2030 Strategy is articulated around five targets. Each target is composed of expected outputs and strategic actions:



TARGET 1.

FISHERIES AND ECOSYSTEMS:

HEALTHY SEAS AND PRODUCTIVE FISHERIES



TARGET 2.

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT:

A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD TO ERADICATE ILLEGAL,
UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING



TARGET 3.

AQUACULTURE:

A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT SECTOR
GROWING TO ITS FULL POTENTIAL



TARGET 4.

LIVELIHOODS:

DECENT EMPLOYMENT AND ENGAGED FISHERS
TOWARDS PROFITABLE FISHERIES



TARGET 5.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT:

TECHNICAL COOPERATION, KNOWLEDGE
SHARING AND EFFICIENT PARTNERSHIPS IN
A SUBREGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

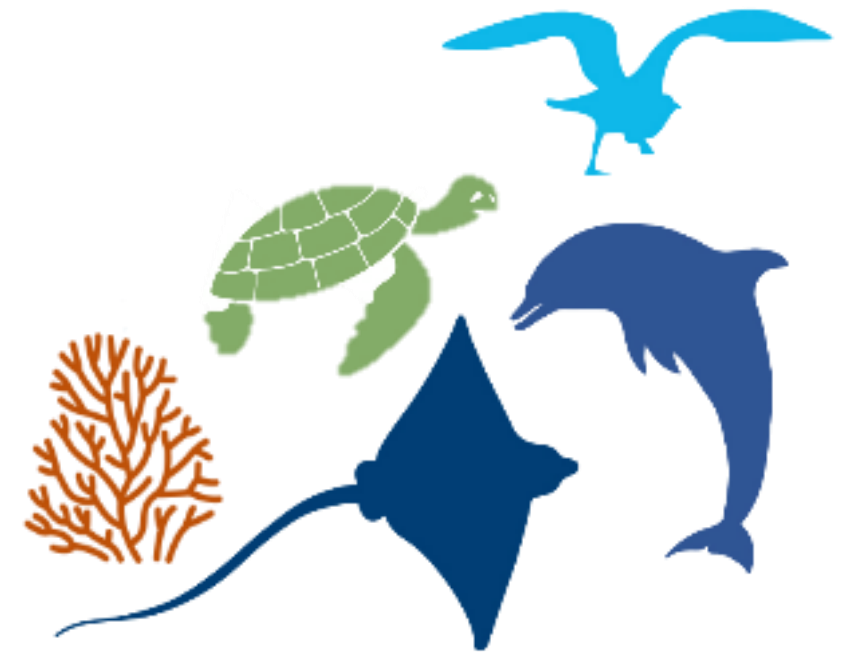
TARGET 1.

Fisheries and ecosystems: healthy seas and productive fisheries

Output 1.3 Strengthen the use of efficient area-based conservation measures as well as technical and nature-based solutions to conserve biodiversity and enhance the productivity of marine living resources, based on the best available scientific advice



Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRAs)

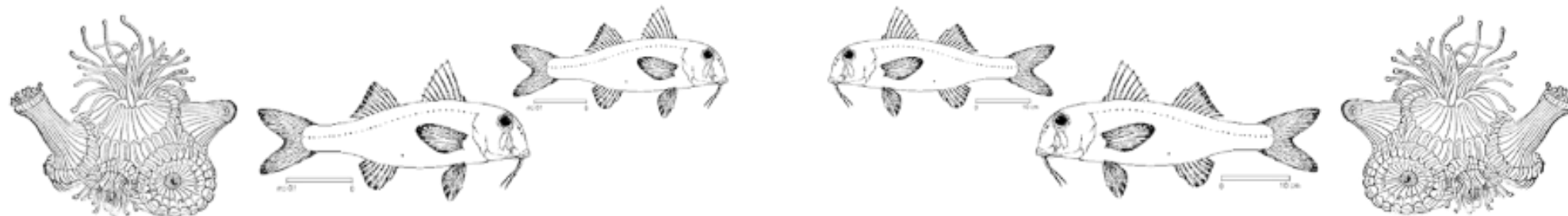


Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRAs)

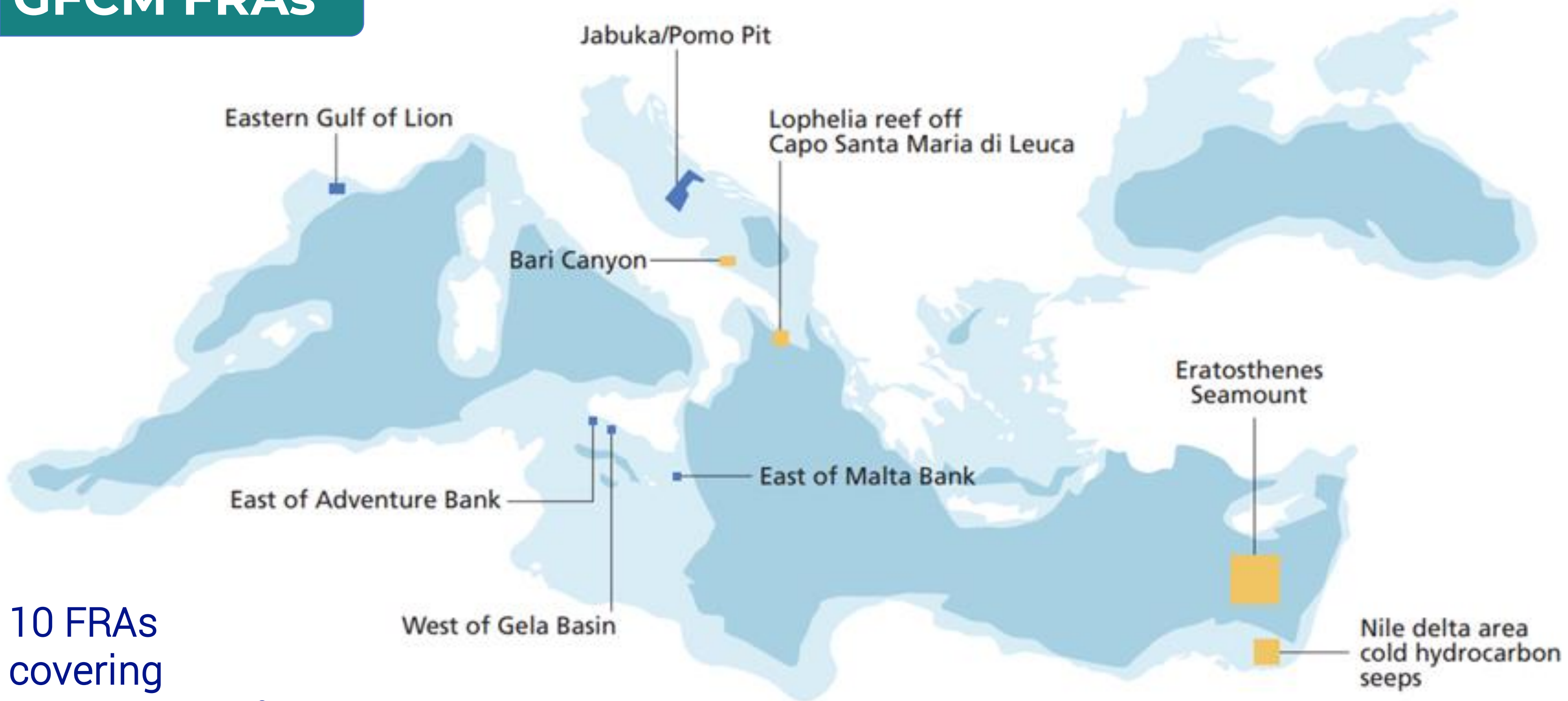
Definition by the GFCM SAC (2007)

"... a geographically-defined area in which all or certain fishing activities are temporarily or permanently banned or restricted in order to improve the exploitation and conservation of harvested living aquatic resources or the protection of marine ecosystems..."

+A FRA can be established to protect marine ecosystems/sensitive habitats from potentially significant adverse impacts (**VME FRAs**) and/or enhance the productivity of marine living resources (**EFH FRAs**), including in the deep sea



GFCM FRAs



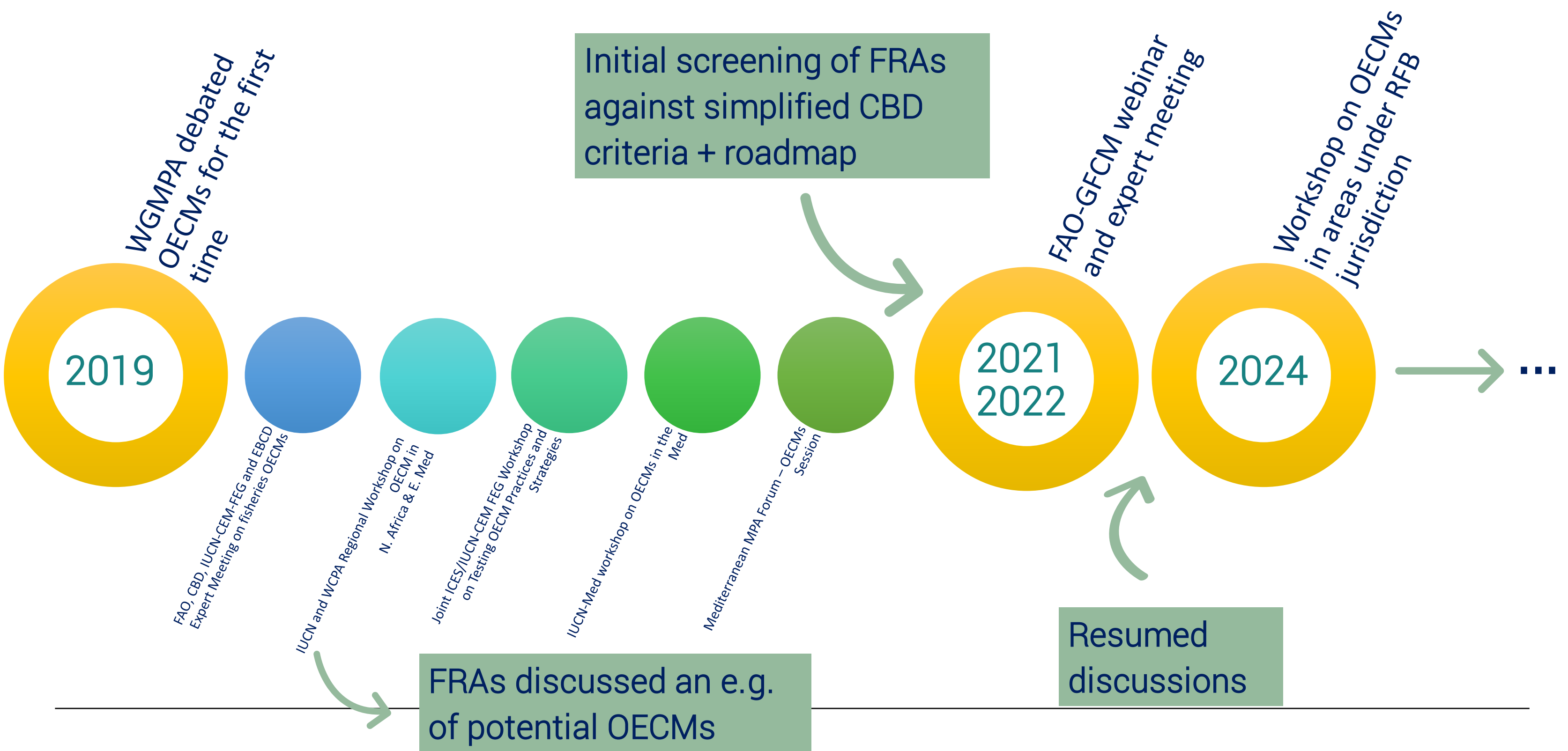
10 FRAs
covering
1 760 000 km²

■ FRA protecting essential fish habitats

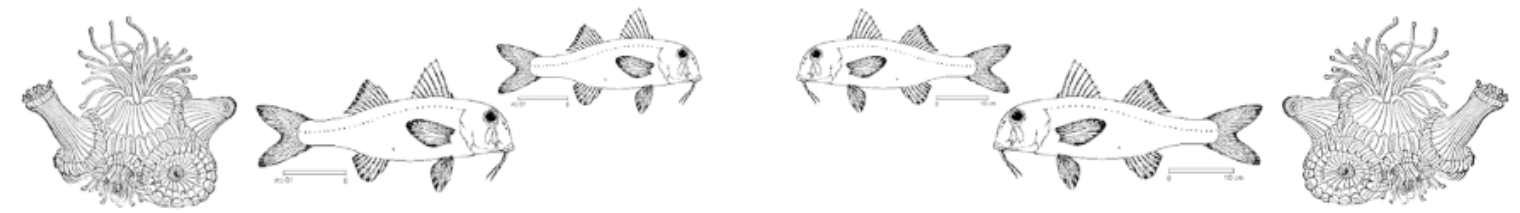
■ Deep-water FRA (> 1 000 m)

■ FRA protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems

GFCM FRAs and OECMs



GFCM and OECMs



- **Early 2019** Debated the concept of 'OECM' for the first time in a GFCM meeting at the **WGMPA**;
 - **May 2019 Expert Meeting on OECMs in the marine fishery sector** (organized by FAO, CBD, IUCN-CEM-FEG and EBCD);
 - the Secretariat was an observer of the debate focused on the background document **IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND GOVERNANCE OF OECMS IN THE MARINE FISHERY SECTOR**
 - **February 2020 Regional Workshop on "Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures In North Africa And Eastern Mediterranean"** organized by IUCN and the WCPA;
 - the GFCM Fisheries Restricted Areas (in the Eastern Med) were discussed by an invited speaker as an example of areas which could be designated as OECMs and a qualifying assessment against CBD criteria was attempted
-



- **March 2021** Joint ICES/IUCN-CEM FEG **Workshop on Testing OECM Practices and Strategies (WKTOPS)**
 - the GFCM Secretariat actively participated in the discussion
 - **April 2021** IUCN-Med Virtual **Workshop Series on Catalysing Identification, Recognition And Reporting Of OECMs In The Mediterranean**
 - the newly adopted GFCM 2030 strategy was presented by the GFCM Secretariat
 - **November 2021** **Mediterranean MPA Forum – OECMs Session**
 - the GFCM Secretariat presented the GFCM work on spatial management measures (Case study: GFCM FRAs)
-



GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Commission (2021)

acknowledging the ongoing discussion on the identification of fisheries/marine OECMs

«encouraged CPCs to participate in the ongoing international process of defining and identifying other effective area-based conservation measures, including by organizing Mediterranean-specific expert meetings, in collaboration with FAO and relevant partners»

GFCM and OECMs



GFCM partnered with FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division to roll-out a process through which OECMs would be introduced to the GFCM area of competence, case studies identified to act as a basis for the evaluation of CBD criteria for OECMs



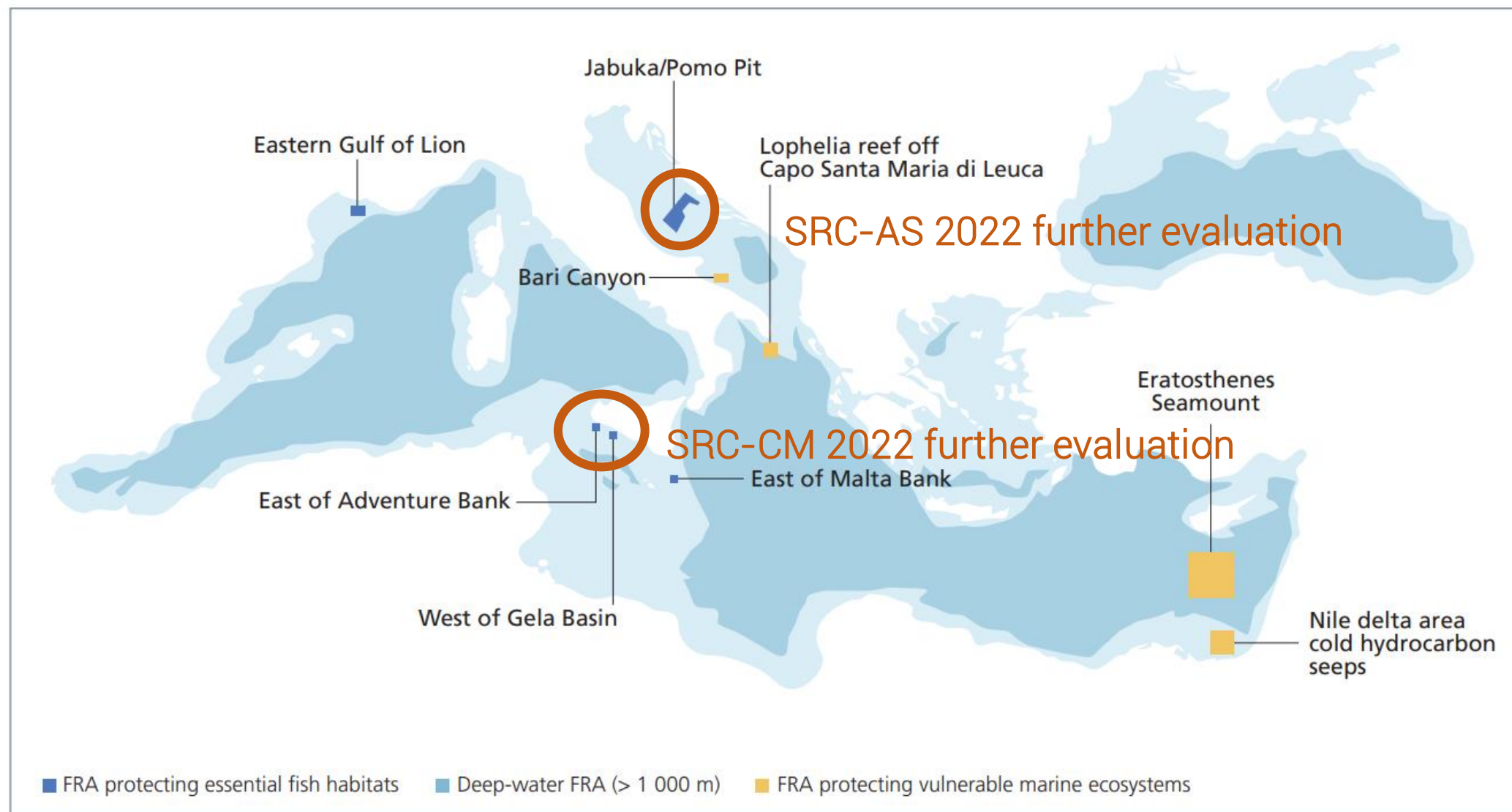
- Dec 2021 Webinar to provide a general introduction to the concept of OECMs, and their evolving scope in global policy and regional strategies
- Feb 2022 Expert meeting setting the way forward towards the identification of fisheries-related other OECMs in the Med

GFCM and OECCMs



- + Almost all GFCM CPCs participated in these meetings, with representative of the administrations (both Fisheries and Environment ministries in some cases) and with national the scientific experts.
- + Initial screening against simplified CBD criteria was performed for all GFCM FRAs and some additional case studies with some emerging as potential OECCMs worthy of full screening.
- + A roadmap for these good cases was proposed to CPCs in 2022, foreseeing further discussions within the GFCM advisory process.

GFCM and OECEMs



GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (2022)

«Taking into account the interest expressed by CPCs and their need to discuss internally, the Committee agreed that the GFCM should provide support to CPCs on an ad hoc basis, while further activities would be contingent on the outcomes of future discussions among CPCs»



- (March) The WGVME-EFH requested to **resume the discussion** on the identification process for fisheries OECEMs in the Mediterranean, from where it was left, including the possibility of a future full assessment of GFCM FRAs against OECEM criteria.
- (April) The Subregional Committees **proposed a roadmap** towards the assessment of GFCM FRAs against OECEMs criteria.
- (June) The SAC 24 raised several procedural questions on the OECEM process and agreed that the GFCM Secretariat, in collaboration with the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division and the CBD Secretariat, should gather responses and revise the roadmap accordingly for the consideration of the annual session of the GFCM.

2023





- (November) **Annual session of the GFCM**

«In the context of resumed discussions on the identification process of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECEMs) in the Mediterranean Sea, the Commission took note of the preliminary answers to the procedural questions posed by the SAC and noted the need to further engage with relevant organizations (e.g. CBD) and partners (e.g. UNEP) on a technical basis in order to explore remaining doubts, suggesting this be done during the Fish Forum in 2024. The results of these discussions would then be reported to the relevant GFCM fora (e.g. WGVM-EFH, SRCs and SAC) with a view to presenting at the forty-seventh annual session a comprehensive portfolio of views»

2023



GFCM and OECMs

2024



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



(January) Workshop on other effective area-based conservation measures in areas under the jurisdiction of RFB (including RFMOs)

- + The workshop was attended by many RFMO secretariats (including GFCM, ICCAT, NAFO, NEAFC, IOTC, CCMLAR, SEAFO), FAO, UNEP-WCMC and more...
- + Many procedural questions on the OECM process were addressed in depth with key actors
- + The main challenges related to the application of the OECM criteria with recommendations on how to address them were reviewed;
- + The implications and opportunities arising from the identification of Fisheries OECMs areas under the jurisdiction of Regional Fisheries Bodies were assessed;
- + CBD criteria for OECMs to case studies on area-based fisheries management measures under the jurisdiction of RFBs were reviewed; NEAFC and NAFO presented the areas under their jurisdiction that will be soon reported to CBD as OECMs

Questions and key replies



- + **Why report OECMs?** Tracking decision-making (other than sensu strictu MPAs) towards international biodiversity conservation targets and **wider recognition and visibility of the role of the fishery sector in conservation**
- + **Who can report OECMs?** **RFMOs** (under mandate of their CPCs) can (are entitled to) submit **their fisheries-based OECMs**
- + **Is the process reversible?** **Yes**, an OECM can be withdrawn from the DB anytime
- + **How report/submit OECMs?** The submission is done online at **The World Database on OECMs** (UNEP-WCMC managing it for **CBD**); a full manual is available to users

User Manual for the World Database on Protected Areas and world database on other effective area-based conservation measures: 1.6



[Explore the World's Protected Areas \(protectedplanet.net\)](https://protectedplanet.net)

REPORTING OECMs

IGO submissions to UNEP-WCMC

- + **What to report? Spatial data and associated attributes:** either a polygon boundary or the central latitude and longitude point for each OECM, etc. to be sent to UNEP-WCMC to a dedicated email address
 - followed by an interaction between the two
- + IGO will sign and return a **Data Contributor Agreement (DCA)**
- + **Verification method: UNEP-WCMC notifies uall CBD focal points of the Member States** requesting comments with a 28-day deadline
 - This process will not require explicit approval from CBD focal points
- + **Final step: Data uploaded to the OECM database** on protectedplanet.net
 - data are ready + signed DCA + collected CBD focal point views



Concluding remarks

- + With the work done since 2019 the GFCM has extensively contributed to **introducing the concept of OECMs** and their application at the Mediterranean level;
- + Among all **GFCM CPCs**, Algeria and Morocco have reported OECMs but these are terrestrial



GFCM FRAs are good examples of potential OECMs that, pending a full evaluation against OECM criteria, could be reported if mandate were given to the GFCM by relevant CPCs.

Previously identified areas include:

- The Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA
- The East of Adventure Bank FRA
- The West of Gela Basin FRA

Thank you for your attention

GFCM Secretariat

www.fao.org/gfcm