

Statement at the 49th session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

FAO HQ, Rome, Italy, 26/10/2026 - 30/10/2026

Distinguished delegates,

European eel is critically endangered and in the Mediterranean stock abundance has declined to less than 10% of its former level. Despite efforts made by GFCM to sustainably manage this species and reverse its decline, European eel shows no sign of recovery.

A joint report by MedReAct and Coalition Clean Baltic - due for release in the next few weeks - analyses CPCs level of compliance on the management measures adopted since 2018. We found that:

- Compliance with fishing mortality reduction targets remains patchy. In recent years, fishing effort and catches have increased in several countries, notwithstanding the GFCM objective of reducing fishing mortality.
- Some CPCs failed reporting catches, effort, spatio-temporal closures, number of vessels, fishers and port inspections for 2024 and previous years. Ultimately, may we remind the parties that unreporting may qualify as IUU fishing.
- Catches of glass eels in Catalonia (Spain) more than doubled between 2024 and 2025.
- In 2024, Italy reported to ICES 1.7 tonnes of recreational catches, despite the GFCM recreational fishing ban.
- Temporal closures in a number of countries remain not aligned with eel migration patterns.

Without signs of stock recovery, and with scientific advice repeatedly calling for zero catch, the window for preventing further decline and disappearance of European eel is closing.

As such, **non-compliance represents a significant threat to species' survival**, which cannot be underestimated. Inconsistencies in reporting and countries' failure to comply with GFCM recommendations are coupled with a lack of clarity in several provisions adopted by the GFCM.

This, we argue, further complicates implementation and full compliance, undermining the already critical state of the European eel.

Considering the above, MedReAct and Coalition Clean Baltic urge the GFCM to adopt a precautionary fishing ban across all life stages of European eel no later than 2027.