

# **MEETING ON THE PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF STURGEON POPULATIONS IN THE BLACK SEA BASIN**

**Sofia, Bulgaria, 23-26 October 2001**

- The Meeting was held in Sofia, Bulgaria on October 23-26, 2001.
- The list of participants is given in Annex I.
- The Meeting adopted the Agenda in Annex II.

## **AGREED CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING FOR ATTENTION OF NATIONAL CITES AUTHORITIES AND RELEVANT GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

Being contracting parties to the CITES convention;

Accepting Decision 11.58 of the Conference of the Parties and Resolution 8.9, as well as the recommendations of the 45th SC meeting in Paris, 19-22 June 2001;

Taking into account existing threats and disturbance on the balance on native sturgeon population in the Black Sea Basin;

Understanding the need of coordinated cooperative actions for implementation of the Convention by the states sharing the Danube River and Black Sea Basin,

The Participants have agreed to:

1. Implement an adaptive management approach as an interim measure until full scientific assessment on sturgeon stocks is available;
2. Establish a Black Sea Sturgeon Management Group to serve as a consultative and coordinative body for developing regional protocols including monitoring and assessment the status of stocks and natural reproduction of sturgeons in the Black Sea basin;
3. Develop a Regional Strategy and Action Plan for the conservation and sustainable management of sturgeon populations, and to request the assistance of bodies such as the FAO and GEF for their elaboration and implementation;
4. Conduct their activities through correspondence and meetings as required to address the following issues:

- 4.1.Recommend (propose) annual total allowable catch quotas for each species at basin level;
  - 4.2.Recommend an allocation of catch quotas between the different countries of the Black Sea region by species;
  - 4.3.Recommend measures for the regulation of the catches taking into account the migration routes and the stage of the reproductive cycle of the different species;
  - 4.4.Determine the allowable harvesting methods, establish periods and zones for total ban on sturgeon fishing and regulations governing by-catch of sturgeon in other fisheries.
  - 4.5.Recommend a share of the catches for domestic use for each state as part of the shared quota;
  - 4.6.Recommend legislative measures against the illegal trade in sturgeon specimens and products;
  - 4.7.Elaborate rules for licensing and registration of exporters, traders and fishermen.
  - 4.8.Develop or investigate measures to use revenue from the sturgeon fisheries and caviar license fees to support research and monitoring, and law enforcement activities.
5. Development and adoption of unified, scientifically based method for stock-assessment and monitoring system.
  6. Make efforts wherever possible to maintain the existing natural spawning potential of the sturgeon stocks of the Black Sea Rivers.
  7. Where the natural stock is seriously depleted, supportive stocking and restocking of sturgeon fingerlings for species in need should be conducted using internationally recognized criteria and methods, including an assessment of the survivorship of released individuals through marking and tagging. Restocking should ideally be done using local genetic material maintaining the brood stock with as high genetic diversity as possible.
  8. Defining the procedure and the requirements for establishment of fish farms for sturgeon breeding and maintaining *in vivo* collections.
  9. It is important when monitoring the state of the stock, to monitor the juvenile production by recapturing and tagging of juveniles.
  10. It is a priority for geneticists to investigate the identity of populations or sub-units of species in the Black Sea region.
  11. Stocking and restocking of rivers or the Black Sea with hybrid forms and fingerlings of non-native sturgeon brood stock shall be discouraged.
  12. To implement the Resolution 11.13 of CITES regarding labeling of the exported caviar.
  13. To participate in the development of a universal DNA-based system for the identification of origin of sturgeon species producing the caviar in trade and re-stocking material.

14. To share the expertise available in the region to facilitate the conservation and sustainable management of sturgeons of the Black Sea basin.
15. To ensure that fishing gear does not prevent adequate escapement to spawning of mature fish.
16. To investigate possibilities for financing of joint projects for the protection and sustainable management of sturgeons.
17. To establish a joint group to discuss common problems of control and surveillance on harvesting, restocking, and illegal fishing and trade.
18. Conservation of genetic resources of sturgeons by development of living collections and cryo-banks of sperm for restoration of threatened sturgeon populations
19. Regional request to FAO for support of the stock assessment and monitoring work to be addressed by the joint working group.
20. Developing a long term funding proposal for stock assessment in the whole Black Sea.
21. Create an inventory of spawning rivers and spawning areas for each species.

The Document of the Meeting was prepared in English in seven copies, which have the same validity.