



## PRESS RELEASE

**Following years of campaigning by MedReAct, other environmental groups and scientists, the largest marine reserve has been established in the Adriatic Sea.**

**Rome, 06 November 2024** - After years of proposals and negotiations the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) has **finally established the largest Fisheries Restricted Area (FRA) in the Otranto Channel, between Italy and Albania.**

The decision was adopted unanimously, and includes a series of conservation measures including a ban on bottom fisheries and recreational fisheries in the FRA core area of over 1,900 km<sup>2</sup> and a strong reduction in fishing effort in a buffer area of approx. 700 km<sup>2</sup>.

Submitted to the CGPM in 2018 by MedReAct and the Adriatic Recovery Project, the Otranto FRA proposal has raised the level of attention on this area so rich in biodiversity.

The **Otranto Channel represents a unique area in the Adriatic Sea**, thanks to its steep slopes that reach over 900 m depths, combined with the presence of physical characteristics that influence the dynamics of water circulation and water exchange with the entire Mediterranean basin. Its seabeds rich in organisms are home to white corals and aggregations of deep-sea sponges, as well as some of the most important colonies of *Isidella elongata* in the Mediterranean Sea.

*Isidella elongata*, also known as bamboo coral, is a now rare gorgonian that plays a fundamental role in forming colonies that are enriched with species, and which support nurseries and spawning of commercial species such as shrimp, hake and Norway lobster, contributing to increasing marine biodiversity. Furthermore, it is a key habitat for dolphins, turtles, devil ray, and the Cuvier's whale.

"After a long negotiation process, the Otranto FRA proposal was finally adopted thanks to the efforts of the European Union, Albania and Adriatic experts. We believe that this is a groundbreaking result for the GFCM, but particularly for the Adriatic, one of the most overexploited basins in the world" - said **Domitilla Senni of MedReAct.**

The decision also follows the extraordinary results achieved by the establishment in 2017 of the [Jabuka/Pomo FRA](#) in the central Adriatic. In this area, a steep increase in the biomass of Norway lobster and hake has been

recorded in just a few years, contributing to the recovery of overexploited fish stocks and the future of fishing.

“Following the establishment of the Jabuka/Pomo FRA and that of the Canyon of Bari in the Southern Adriatic, the establishment of a new marine reserve in the Otranto Channel is a further step towards the creation of a network of FRA in the Adriatic: a model to be replicated in the rest of the Mediterranean region” - concluded **Domitilla Senni**.

