



Serial No. N4049

NAFO SCS Doc. 99/3

SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL MEETING – APRIL 1999

**MEETING OF FAO AND NON-FAO REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES OR
ARRANGEMENTS**

ROME, ITALY, 11-12 FEBRUARY 1999

by

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A meeting of FAO and Non-FAO Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFB) or Arrangements was held on 11 and 12 February 1999 at FAO Headquarters, Rome. Representatives from 17 regional fishery bodies (7 FAO and 10 non-FAO) participated. NAFO was represented by the Chairman of the Fisheries Commission and the Chairman of the Scientific Council.

One point of interest of NAFO was the item of harmonization of nomenclature in relation to Precautionary Approach. The Chairman of the Fisheries Commission and the Chairman of the Scientific Council discussed the question to propose this issue for the adoption of agenda. After contacting other participants, they came to the unanimous conclusion that the forum of this meeting was not appropriate to raise the issue of harmonization of definitions, nomenclature and concepts in relation to the Precautionary Approach. The level of discussion would have been too detailed and participants would have been not competent to discuss on such a detailed level. Participants mostly were secretaries of the regional fisheries bodies and not prepared or had no mandate to discuss this issue.

During the meeting a proposal was made by NEAFC to plan a joint meeting of North Atlantic regional fisheries bodies (ICES, NEAFC, NASCO, NAFO) to discuss common problems. It seems that this would be an appropriate forum to discuss the issue of harmonization of nomenclature in relation to PA.

The meeting dealt with initiatives taken, and difficulties encountered, by RFBs in the implementation of recently-adopted international instruments, particularly with respect to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, UN Fish Stocks Agreement, Compliance Agreement and Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Major issues facing the efficient operation of RFBs were considered: constraints, conservation and management, collaboration and information flows and exchanges, nature and extent of conflicts in fishery management and steps taken to resolve such conflicts in timely and peaceful manner as well as cooperation with industry and civil society. Further consideration was on fishery status and trends reporting. In this context, proposals for arrangements of involvement of RFBs and non-FAO experts in a consensus seeking process for conducting assessments of status and trends were discussed. The relationship between FAO data collection and assessments of trends and the Living Marine Resources Module of the Global Ocean Observing System was considered.

The meetings's discussions concentrated, *inter alia*, on the following issues:

- i. ways for RFBs to promote the implementation of the recent series of international instruments and initiatives;
- ii. improved means of promoting the precautionary approach to fisheries management;
- iii. better mechanisms for the exchange of information among RFBs and between RFBs and FAO;
- iv. the prospects for closer collaboration between RFBs on a geographic or species basis and means to improve such collaboration; and
- v. mechanisms to promote further the global co-ordination of the activities of RFBs.

The meeting came to the following conclusions:

- i. further meetings of FRBs should be held regularly, preferably prior to regular sessions of COFI; FAO should serve as the focal point for such meetings and also act as a channel for the exchange and synthesis of information and experiences among RFBs
- ii. in developing and implementing management measures, collaboration should be sought between management authorities, scientists, fishermen, industry and, where appropriate other NGOs and stakeholders, the ultimate responsibility for decision-taking remaining with the management authorities;
- iii. RFBs should continue to review and adapt where appropriate their mandates, structures and strategies in order to better play their increasingly important roles in the process of achieving sustainable fisheries development and, to discharge their responsibilities in implementing the recent series of international instruments concerned with fisheries; attention should be drawn to states for their wider participation in these instruments
- iv. those RFBs charged with the responsibility for the management and governance of fisheries should continue their efforts to implement the Precautionary Approach;
- v. further efforts should be made in particular through collaboration between RFBs to resolve the problems which continue to confront some RFBs as a result of the activities of non-members and vessels flying 'flags of convenience';
- vi. those relevant RFBs which were not members of the CWP on Fisheries Statistics are encouraged to consider participation in its work;
- vii. the FAO ACFR (Advisory Committee on Fisheries Research) Working Party on Status and Trends in Fisheries should give priority to reviewing current methodologies used by FAO in status and trends reporting and to the best ways of assembling and presenting the information;
- viii. the Fisheries Global Information System (FIGIS) being developed by FAO as an Internet based initiative has the potential to become a valuable means of collaboration among international and regional organizations dealing with fisheries, particularly in providing global monitoring on information of resources and fisheries;
- ix. there is a clear difference between the issues and problems faced by some RFBs, consisting mainly of developed countries and those of developing countries, particularly in respect of financial support and of the complex issues involved in small-scale, multispecies fisheries;
- x. further improvements are needed, despite advances achieved by some RFBs, in the monitoring and enforcement of fisheries management measures;
- xi. the issue of over-capacity in world fisheries remains a matter of serious concern, mainly because of the tendency for excess capacity to spill over to other regions;
- xii. there are important impacts on the work of some RFBs from factors (for instance environment) which are beyond their competence. Methods to resolve those problems should be monitored carefully.

All of these conclusions are relevant for NAFO General Council and Fisheries commission. The conclusions related to FIGIS are of importance for the tasks of Scientific Council and may have also an impact on the tasks of the secretariat.

List of participating organisations

ASIA-Pacific Fisheries Commission
Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (**CCMLR**)
Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna
Commission for Inland Fisheries of Latin America
Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics (**CWP**)
European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission (**EIFAC**)
Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (**COPACE**)
General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (**IOTC**)
International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission (**IBFSC**)
International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (**ICCAT**)
International Whaling Commission (**IWC**)
Lake Victoria Fisheries Commission
Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (**NAFO**)
Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Commission (**NEAFC**)
North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (**NASCO**)
North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission
Permanent South Pacific Commission
Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center
South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency
Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission