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**SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL MEETING – JUNE 2003**

**Report of the Third Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies**

3-4 March 2003

**PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT**

This is the final report approved by the Third Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies held in Rome on 3 and 4 March 2003.

FAO. Report of the Third Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies. Rome, 3-4 March 2003. *FAO Fisheries Report* No. 645. Rome, FAO 2003.

**ABSTRACT**

The Third Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) was held at FAO Headquarters, Rome, on 3 and 4 March 2003. The Meeting reviewed the decisions of the Twenty-Fifth Session of COFI of relevance to Regional Fishery Bodies and FAO Fisheries Circular 985 containing summary information about RFBs. The Meeting discussed external factors affecting the management of fisheries, the status of partnerships between RFBs and FAO to develop the Fisheries Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS), implications for RFBs from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), approaches to incorporate ecosystem considerations into fisheries management by RFBs, relations between RFBs and UNEP and private sector involvement in the work of RFBs.

The Meeting reached a number of conclusions regarding matters meriting the attention of RFBs, governments and FAO.

Distribution:

Members of the Committee  
Other interested nations and international organizations  
FAO Fisheries Department  
FAO Regional Fishery Officers

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Third Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies was held on 3 and 4 March 2003 at FAO Headquarters, Rome. Participants included representatives from 27 Regional Fishery Bodies, and from the Coordination Working Party on Fishery Statistics (CWP) and the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea (DOALOS). Representatives of the FAO Fisheries Department were also in attendance. The List of Participants is in Appendix B.
2. The Chair, Mr. Robin Allen, opened the Meeting by welcoming all participants and expressed the appreciation on behalf of the RFBs to FAO for facilitating the work of the Bureau during the inter-sessional period and for the excellent facilities provided for the meeting. Mr. Ichiro Nomura, Assistant Director-General, FAO Fisheries Department, addressed the participants on behalf of the Fisheries Department. Referring to the unprecedented challenges RFBs are facing, he noted their role of promoting responsible behaviour in the fisheries sector. He stated that cooperation and coordination among RFBs is a goal that should be fostered, and commended the RFBs for having seized the initiative. FAO will seek to cooperate with RFBs and complement their decisions. The full text of the Assistant Director-General's statement is in Appendix D.

## **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MEETING**

3. The Meeting adopted the agenda in Appendix A. A List of Documents provided to the meeting is in Appendix C.
4. It was proposed that the office bearers elected at the second session should continue to hold office until the end of the third session and election of officers for the next session be held in accordance with the agenda. The meeting agreed, and the officers for the second session are:

Chairperson: Mr. Robin Allen, Director, Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC);  
 Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Estabán de Salas, Executive Secretary, Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR);  
 Rapporteur: Mr. Tissa Amaratunga, Deputy Executive Secretary, Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization.

5. The FAO Fisheries Department provided the Secretariat for the Meeting.
6. The Chair advised that some requests for observer status had been received from a member of COFI and an NGO. The Meeting noted that its purpose is to enhance cooperation and coordination among RFBs, and to that end to discuss matters of mutual interest to RFBs and not to make decisions; it is not a formal body and has no specific rules of procedure. The Meeting declined to approve the requests at this time. Attendance of observers would require administrative and logistical support which is not currently available. In keeping with their internal procedures, some participants suggested that rules for observers would be needed prior to any consideration of their participation.

## **REVIEW OF THE DECISIONS OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF COFI OF RELEVANCE TO REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES**

7. Referring to the draft report of the Twenty-Fifth Session of COFI, the following issues were identified as important to RFBs:
  - the value of SOFIA, ASFA, FIGIS and involvement of RFBs; (para 12)
  - any regional plans of action in support of the IPOAs; (para 13-22)
  - role of RFBs in adopting listings for fishing vessels (e.g. "white lists"); (para 21)
  - strengthening RFBs, Compliance Agreement: relevant port State measures; improving and extending catch documentation; decommissioning and scrapping of vessels, hard and soft law; (para 22)
  - FAO's role in disseminating information about RFB's activities in deep sea fisheries; (para 26)
  - international cooperation in making VMS a more effective part of MCS; (para 29)

- any FAO guidelines on ecolabelling should include fish caught in compliance with RFB rules; (para 39)
  - harmonization of catch certification noting tuna bodies are considering this; (para 43)
  - Status and Trends reporting and strategies, roles for RFBs; (paras 54-63)
  - Implications of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management – need for close cooperation within RFBs; (paras 80-89)
  - Cooperation with CITES.
8. The Meeting discussed the issue of cooperation with CITES at length, with some participants referring to their cooperation with CITES and others expressing concern about its scientific basis for listing species on CITES appendices. It was noted that FAO members have agreed that FAO become more involved in CITES matters relating to CITES listing with respect to commercially exploited aquatic species in consultation with RFBs, and it was suggested that RFBs in contact with CITES keep other bodies informed. One RFB noted that the Ministries of Environment often deal with CITES so it can only deal with issues indirectly. The FAO Secretariat advised the Meeting it was prepared to continue acting as a conduit between the CITES Secretariat and RFBs.
  9. Of the COFI issues relevant to RFBs, one RFB noted that its priority is to focus on areas where it can make a difference in the short to medium term, and this would include strengthening RFBs, IUU fishing, cooperation to make VMS systems more effective and harmonization of catch certification.
  10. Others noted progress on practical steps to stop IUU fishing, including a voluntary exchange of enforcement related information, developing a list of types of information that might be exchanged, monthly reporting by species and sub-regions, monthly landing reports of vessels from other member countries. Successful actions taken in relation to non-contracting parties, including open registry States, were reported by several RFBs. The effectiveness of trade information schemes and white lists were discussed. One RFB explained the difficulty in distinguishing unreported fishing and illegal catches.
  11. The difficulty in controlling transshipment at sea was discussed, and it was noted that this is prohibited in certain situations and that automatic VMS and surveillance systems can detect transshipment at sea.

#### **SUMMARY INFORMATION ON THE ROLE OF REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES**

12. FAO Fisheries Circular 985 on Summary Information on the Role of International Fishery Organizations or Arrangements and other Bodies Concerned with the Conservation and Management of Living Aquatic Resources was introduced. It was noted in discussion that that RFBs have limited resources to respond to questionnaires such as the one that formed the basis of the survey for Circular 985. The usefulness of the document for RFBs in their ongoing work was noted and it was suggested that FAO consider including the information relating to the institutional frameworks of RFBs in the document on the FAO website..

#### **EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES**

13. Several RFBs referred to external factors as a major concern affecting the management of fisheries. External factors can have more significant effects on the stocks than management actions. Participants referred particularly to pollution, dams, river outflows, population growth, hydroelectric establishments, aquaculture and other man-made factors as major concerns affecting habitat modification. There was also concern about loss of genetic diversity. Some other problems noted by RFBs are the impact of trade liberalization and an increasing need for cooperation with environmental organizations or institutions in the area. Post harvest problems were described (which also impact on the quality of data for fisheries management), together with concerns about how consumer and trade patterns are affecting fisheries management. Some RFBs indicated their difficulties in addressing the impacts of consumer preferences, supply and demand. Several RFBs are addressing the problems, some with funding assistance. It was suggested that RFBs can play a positive role in addressing external factors by contributing regional cooperation, knowledge and expertise, and communicating the effects of external factors on fisheries.

## **STATUS OF PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES AND FAO TO DEVELOP FIRMS**

14. Mr. Richard Grainger presented a general introduction to the paper on Implementation of the Fisheries Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) Partnership Arrangement: Status and Prospects (Document RFBIII/2003/4), and Mr. Marc Taconet, FIGIS Manager explained the main content. In discussion, one RFB who had been mandated in principle to join the proposed partnership encouraged other RFBs to lend their support to FIRMS. It was noted that RFBs increasingly operate in a global context.
15. Some RFBs noted they had not been approached, and many will bring the matter to the attention of their members. The potential benefits to members and costs to the organization will be considered. It was noted that the project can be broader than resource monitoring, and can also serve as a description of fisheries institutions and management regimes.
16. A strong need for an authoritative database and fisheries trends was recognized. It would be a big step forward in dealing with statements by non-fisheries bodies on the state of fisheries resources. The Meeting took note of the need for a comprehensive geographical coverage and for statistics to use as a basis for advice on fisheries management.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES FROM THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

17. The Meeting considered the COFI document 2003/Inf.14 on the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002 and its Implications for Fisheries, in particular paragraphs 19 and following on specific activities with time-bound goals. In particular, it took note of the following goals:
  - Put into effect the IPOA on the Management of Fishing Capacity by 2005; (para 22)
  - Put into effect the IPOA to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing by 2004; (para 24)
  - Encourage the application of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) by 2010; (para 25)
  - Maintain or restore stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield by 2015; (para 27)
18. The Meeting also took into account the following specified goals of WSSD: (para 11)
  - Establish by 2004 a regular process under the United Nations for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, both current and foreseeable, building on existing regional assessments.
  - Urgently develop and implement national, and, where appropriate, regional plans of action, to put into effect the FAO International Plans of Action;

and in respect of consultation and coordination the need to: (para 12)

  - Establish an effective, transparent and regular inter-agency coordination mechanism on ocean and coastal issues within the United Nations System;
  - Strengthen regional cooperation and coordination between the relevant regional organizations and programmes, the UNEP regional seas programmes, regional fisheries management organizations and other regional science, health and development organizations;

and the call on the international community to: (para 15)

  - Further implement sustainable fisheries management and improve financial returns from fisheries by supporting and strengthening relevant regional fisheries management organizations, as appropriate, such as the recently established Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and such agreements as the Convention

on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.

19. One RFB explained that, although management measures are enjoying some success and goals are being set for stock recovery, some stocks would probably not recover to MSY levels by 2015 without unrealistic reductions in fishing. Another RFB reported that they had reached such a goal set in 1997 for many fisheries, even though the target year was 2010. One RFB noted that external factors present a major problem in implementing this goal, and another explained that attaining the goal will be assisted by measures such as trade documentation schemes, Port State measures, white lists and blacklists.
20. Regarding implementation of the ecosystem approach, while many RFBs are working towards such an approach as mandated by their members, they agreed that this is best done as a step-by-step approach. It is important that data collection systems, a proper decision making process and scientific information be developed as a foundation. Some RFBs report major difficulties with fundamental concerns such as collecting accurate catch statistics. Some RFBs are waiting for the relevant technical guidelines to be developed, which they will then seek to implement. Others are receiving assistance to manage on an ecosystem basis, but external factors, such as civil unrest, are preventing it.
21. One RFB reported its goal to reach MSY has been reached for some stocks earlier than the timeline they had previously set, and noted the trade information scheme appears to have eliminated IUU fishing. Some participants noted that achieving MSY levels had to take account of an ecosystem approach and fluctuations in stock sizes caused by external factors. It was noted that in this context MSY may not constitute an appropriate reference point, especially for multispecies fisheries.
22. It was recognized that WSSD didn't address inland fisheries to the same extent as marine fisheries.
23. The WSSD outputs mix concepts, such as the technical concepts involved in IUU fishing and the more theoretical concepts in developing ecosystem approaches. For the latter, it was suggested that RFBs need to evaluate their decision making systems, particularly in respect of providing proactive measures rather than responding to particular problems as they manifest themselves.

#### **APPROACHES TO INCORPORATE ECOSYSTEM CONSIDERATIONS INTO FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BY REGIONAL FISHERIES BODIES**

24. A number of RFBs reported on their progress in implementing approaches to incorporate ecosystem considerations into fisheries management. These are reported in Appendix E. Several RFBs are engaged in ecosystem modeling to provide insight into the effects of fisheries on the ecosystem.
25. Some participants expressed concern that the ecosystem approach is not clearly understood or defined. During discussion, it was understood that elements are included such as associated species, by-catch and effect on the environment, which some RFBs are addressing. However, it may also include social-economic aspects which most RFBs do not have the resources or mandate to consider. Fisheries management by RFBs may be limited to one or more species or geographic areas, making it difficult for them to adopt an ecosystem approach. A possible response would be collaboration among appropriate RFBs. Participants noted that strengthening RFBs would be needed in order to address ecosystem considerations appropriately.
26. It appeared that only one RFB was mandated by its convention to take ecosystem and precautionary approaches. Another RFB had a flexible enough Convention that it has scope for taking an ecosystem approach in terms of adding other species to its management regime and reviewing catches and by-catches of many other species seen in the fishery. In general, participants recognized that the precautionary approach can be adopted, but it might be necessary for RFBs to reconsider their mandate to facilitate taking an ecosystem approach.
27. The value of observers in collecting data for ecosystem management was discussed. It was noted that one RFB has developed a technical alternative to observers, involving hydraulic sensors in combination with GPS and digital cameras. This is an indication of rapidly evolving technology for observer replacement. However, it was noted that these techniques were not applicable in many small scale fisheries.

28. Some RFBs reinforced the importance of considering external factors, people and socioeconomic considerations as part of the ecosystem approach, noting that small scale fisheries do not receive enough attention in this respect.

#### **RELATIONS BETWEEN REGIONAL BODIES AND UNEP**

29. It was recalled that a UNEP representative attended the Second Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies, and encouraged a closer relationship between the RFBs and the Regional Seas Programmes (RSP). There have also been a number of approaches to RFBs by UNEP in the interim to attend UNEP-sponsored meetings relating to fisheries matters such as sustainable fisheries and the effect of subsidies in fisheries. It was suggested that it would be useful for RFBs to share views on the relationship between RFBs and UNEP.
30. Participants agreed that there should be a strong emphasis on RFBs inputting their management expertise to RSPs, and several participants noted positive relations and *de facto* cooperation in this regard. However, there was general agreement that RFBs should project their competence collectively. One way of doing this would be for FAO to include consolidated information on its website, such as that appearing in Circular 985, and to make such information available to CITES and UNEP. Such information could be housed in FIGIS when it becomes fully operational. In addition, CITES and UNEP Secretariats should receive this information on a proactive basis.

#### **ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON**

31. The Meeting acclaimed the following officers for the Fourth Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies:

Chairperson:	Mr. Denzil Miller, Executive Secretary, Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR);
Vice Chairperson:	Mr. Victor Restrepo, Assistant Executive Secretary, International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT);
Rapporteur	Mr. Tissa Amaratunga, Deputy Executive Secretary, Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO).

32. It was agreed that the Fourth Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies will be held after the Twenty-sixth Session of COFI, and will take place in early March, 2005 at FAO headquarters in Rome.

#### **OTHER MATTERS - PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE WORK OF RFBs**

33. The trend of private sector involvement in the work of the RFBs was discussed, and experiences shared. On the whole, participants reported positive results from private sector involvement to date. Many RFBs have projects that involve industry input into such projects as stock assessments, research, a tagging project, funding, liaison and containment initiatives, developing management procedures, VMS testing. In addition, initiatives to seek private sector funding were described.

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<b>THIRD MEETING OF REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES</b>
<b>Rome, Italy, 3-4 March 2003</b>
<b>AGENDA</b>

**German Room (C-269)****Monday, 3 March 2003****Morning: 09.00 – 12.00 hours**

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Adoption of the Agenda and arrangements for the Meeting
3. Review of the decisions of the Twenty-fifth Session of COFI relating to regional fishery bodies
4. Summary Information on the Role of Regional Fishery Bodies
5. External factors affecting the management of fisheries

**Afternoon: 14.00 – 17.00 hours**

6. Status of partnerships between regional fishery bodies and FAO to develop FIRMS
7. Implications for Regional Fishery Bodies from the World Summit on Sustainable Development
8. Approaches to incorporate ecosystems considerations into fisheries management by regional fishery bodies

**Tuesday, 4 March 2003****Morning: 09.00 – 12.00 hours**

9. Relations between regional fishery bodies and UNEP
10. Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson
11. Date and place of the Fourth Meeting
12. Any other matters

**Afternoon: 17.00 hours**

13. Adoption of the Report



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<b>THIRD MEETING OF REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES</b>
<b>Rome, Italy, 3-4 March 2003</b>
<b>LIST OF DOCUMENTS</b>

RFB/III/2003/1	Provisional Agenda and Timetable
RFB/III/2003/2	Report of the Twenty-fifth Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, Rome, Italy, 24-28 February 2003
RFB/III/2003/3	Compilation of Statements by Regional Fishery Bodies Secretariats on Fisheries Resources Monitoring Systems (FIRMS)
RFB/III/2003/4	Implementation of the Fisheries Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) Partnership Agreement: Status and Prospects
RFB/III/2003/5	World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002 and its Implications for Fisheries (COFI/2003/inf.14)
RFB/III/2003/6	Compilation of Contributions by Regional Fishery Bodies Secretariats on the Initiatives taken by their Bodies to Incorporate Ecosystem Consideration into Fisheries Management
RFB/III/2003/7	Implementation of Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management to Achieve Responsible Fisheries and to Restore Fisheries Resources and Marine Environments (COFI/2003/10)
RFB/III/2003/Inf.1	Provisional List of Documents
RFB/III/2003/Inf.2	Provisional List of Participants
RFB/III/2003/Inf.3	Statement by the Assistant Director-General, FAO Fisheries Department
RFB/III/2003/Inf.4	Report of the Second Meeting of FAO and Non- FAO Regional Fishery Bodies or Arrangements, Rome, Italy, 20-21 February 2001 (FIPL/R645)
RFB/III/2003/Inf.5	Summary Information on the Role of International Fishery Organizations or Arrangements and other Bodies Concerned with the Conservation and Management of Living Aquatic Resources (FIPL/C985)
RFB/III/2003/Inf.6	Report of the Expert Consultation on Ecosystem-based Fisheries Management, Reykjavik, Iceland, 16-19 September 2002 (COFI/2003/Inf.13)

**OPENING STATEMENT BY MR. ICHIRO NOMURA  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL, FISHERIES DEPARTMENT**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Representatives of Regional Fisheries Bodies, Colleagues and Friends:

I very much appreciate the opportunity to be with you today at the opening of the Third Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies. It is a great pleasure for me, as the Assistant Director-General of the Fisheries Department, to extend to you all a warm welcome to Rome and FAO on behalf of the Director-General of FAO. When I look around this room I see many old friends and some new ones. I look forward to interacting with you all during this Meeting.

I would like to thank the Secretariats of all Regional Fishery Bodies for the high level cooperation that FAO enjoys with them. I know that the periodic requests for information concerning the activities of your bodies create additional work for you. However, let me state that your collaboration is highly valued and needed and that it would be very difficult for FAO to undertake some of its activities without such close and effective collaboration.

We all know that fisheries make a major contribution to global food security both directly as a source of food, income and employment and indirectly in the production of meal and oil for animal feed. However, against the impressive statistical backdrop that, in this respect, has been considered by COFI at its 25th session and is reflected in the last edition of SOFIA, we know that many key commercial fish stocks are already at their productive limits, the proportion of low value species in reported catches is increasing and the level of traditional target species has declined. This is an issue that is a concern to us all and one that affects directly the work of Regional Fishery Bodies.

Regional Fishery Bodies play a pivotal role in conserving and managing fisheries resources and in generally promoting responsible and sustainable behaviour in the fisheries sector. Indeed, there is no realistic alternative mechanism to perform such a role.

In recent years the demands placed on Regional Fishery Bodies have become heavier as the productivity of fish stocks has dwindled and fishing pressure increased. This reduction in stocks has, in particular, led to widespread activities of an illegal, unreported and unregulated nature which undermine the work of Regional Bodies.

It is recognized that Regional Fishery Bodies are now facing unprecedented challenges in their efforts to facilitate sustainable fisheries management. This has prompted some bodies to seek new solutions to the problems they are encountering. At the same time members of some Regional Fishery Bodies are urging that management be pursued in a precautionary manner and that an ecosystem approach to management be adopted. In this respect, it is important to allude briefly the commitment agreed upon in the Plan of Implementation adopted by the WSSD in 2002, particularly in relation to the "ecosystem approach", as well as the definition of concrete goals with set deadlines. The need to implement these novel and evolving management concepts further burdens the work of Regional Fishery Bodies.

Cooperation and coordination among Regional Fishery Bodies is a goal that should be fostered and encouraged in a vigorous way. FAO is therefore pleased that the Secretariats of your respective Bodies have seized the initiative to assume responsibility for the planning and organization of these biennial meetings. I believe that such an initiative demonstrates the value of these meetings and the importance that your bodies attach to them. As in the past, FAO stands ready to assist in the facilitation of these meetings but urges that the Secretariats of your bodies continue to play an active and leading role in determining the framework for discussion.

The Agenda for this Session is both highly topical and challenging. Meeting after the conclusion of the Twenty-fifth Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) you will be well placed to review the decisions made by the Committee and to consider how they might affect your bodies' activities. The rescheduling of this Session to take place after COFI, rather than before, is a most worthwhile innovation.

Other matters to be addressed in this meeting and which impinge directly on the work of your bodies include:

- External factors affecting the management of fisheries. This matter was considered at your last Meeting but it was agreed that it should be kept under review;

- The status of partnerships between regional Fishery Bodies and FAO to develop the Fisheries Resources Monitoring System, otherwise known as FIRMS. While the status of this partnership is yet to be determined, it is my firm conviction that the collaboration envisaged under FIRMS will assist FAO to enhance its global fisheries reporting responsibilities;
- Implications for Regional Fishery Bodies from the World Summit on Sustainable Development which was held in South Africa in 2002. The Plan of Implementation adopted by the Summit calls for a range of initiatives relevant to the work of your bodies including strengthening regional cooperation and coordination among organizations and programmes. This meeting provides a unique opportunity for your bodies to consider how such strengthening might be facilitated;
- Ways and means of incorporating ecosystem considerations into fisheries management by Regional Fishery Bodies. I am aware that some Regional Fishery Bodies are already grappling with this issue in a practical way and that exchanges of experience will be most beneficial to other bodies that may not yet have travelled so far down the ecosystem management path; and
- Relations between Regional Fishery Bodies and UNEP, and its regional organs, particularly those which were established in the framework of the regional seas programme.

Throughout this meeting FAO will pay particular attention to the discussions and, following the conclusion of the meeting, seek to collaborate with Regional Fishery Bodies to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations that might be adopted. I also wish to advise that staff of the Fisheries Department will be available during the meeting to provide technical input to discussions in the event that such input is sought.

I am optimistic that the Third Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies will be marked by success and that its outcome will serve to strengthen and further promote more responsible and sustainable fisheries around the world.

I wish you well in your deliberations and thank you very much for your attention.



## APPENDIX E

**COMPILATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS BY REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES SECRETARIATS ON THE  
INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THEIR BODIES TO INCORPORATE ECOSYSTEM CONSIDERATION  
INTO FISHERIES MANAGEMENT**

**CCAMLR**

CCAMLR's approach to the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources is defined by Article II of the Convention which states:

1. The objective of this Convention is the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources.
2. For the purposes of this Convention, the term 'conservation' includes rational use.
3. Any harvesting and associated activities in the area to which this Convention applies shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of this Convention and with the following principles of conservation:
  - (a) prevention of decrease in the size of any harvested population to levels below those which ensure its stable recruitment. For this purpose its size should not be allowed to fall below a level close to that which ensures the greatest net annual increment;
  - (b) maintenance of the ecological relationships between harvested, dependent and related populations of Antarctic marine living resources and the restoration of depleted populations to the levels defined in subparagraph (a) above; and
  - (c) prevention of change(s) or minimization of the risk of change(s) in the marine ecosystem which are not potentially reversible over two or three decades, taking into account the state of available knowledge of the direct and indirect impact of harvesting, the effect of the introduction of alien species, the effects of associated activities on the marine ecosystem and of the effects of environmental changes, with the aim of making possible the sustained conservation of Antarctic marine living resources.

From these principles, CCAMLR has approached its management responsibilities by following:

- (i) A 'precautionary' approach. CCAMLR collects what data it can, then weighs up the extent and effect of uncertainties and gaps in such data before taking any management decision(s). The approach aims to minimize the risk of long-term adverse effects rather than delaying decisions until all necessary data are available, and
- (ii) An 'ecosystem' approach. This strives to account not only for inter-relationships between fisheries and harvested species, but also their interactions with species dependent on, or related to, the latter. Natural variability is also considered, including that associated with physical processes (such as currents, sea temperature). The task is complex and difficult with CCAMLR collecting fisheries, as well as specific ecosystem, data to provide a basis for, and to develop, management decision rules at appropriate temporal and spatial scales.

Through application of (i) and (ii) above, CCAMLR seeks to preserve the 'health' of the Antarctic marine ecosystem by setting conservative (i.e. precautionary) catch limits to take account of the needs of associated species in a manner which preserves the ecological sustainability of all the species concerned. It also undertakes ecosystem assessments in order to highlight possible areas of concern. The latter uses both fisheries information and that collected by the *CCAMLR Ecosystem Monitoring Programme (CEMP)*.

**CCSBT**

This document summarises the actions of the CCSBT against the Reykjavik Declaration. In that Declaration participants called for, inter alia, effective management plans; mechanisms for reducing excessive fishing; prevention of adverse effects on marine ecosystems; advancement of the scientific base to ensure sustainable yields; improvements in the monitoring of by-catch; and the introduction of sound regulatory frameworks.

The SBT fishery is characterized by:

- one stock with one known spawning ground
- has been roughly stable since the mid-1990s or early-1990s at low levels
- sexual maturity no earlier than 8 years and a lifespan up to 40 years
- limitations on knowledge of the dynamics of the stock
- 6 principal fishers
- uncertain fishing practices in the one known spawning ground by a developing nation with an immature fishing administration
- difficult economics for targeted fishing unless sashimi markets can be accessed
- one monopsonist buyer in Japan at the moment

In this context the CCSBT has:

- used extensive scientific assessment of the SBT stock to form judgements about stock management and conservation
- commenced a scientific research program to enhance the data already available for stock assessment purposes
- engaged external scientific input for stock assessment
- begun development of a management procedure to be completed in early 2004
- set total allowable catches and national allocations for the fishery as a primary management tool – currently these are voluntary and largely observed
- established a trade certification system to regulate and monitor trade in SBT
- taken decisions requiring members to apply responsible fishing practices eg the use of tori poles established an Ecologically Related Species Working Group to advise the Commission on activities/actions relevant to the fishery's interface with other species and to predator and prey species which may affect the condition of the SBT stock
- is currently producing education pamphlets for fishers concerning the seabird and shark interface with the fishery
- developed a draft observer standard for the fishery for consideration in 2003, which will involve monitoring of catch of other species, discards, and the recovery of tags
- engaged and supported non-members in the fishery to ensure the Commission's conservation and management procedures are not undermined

In terms of outcomes, these measures have collectively resulted in the responsible management of the SBT fishery, which is currently at some risk. After a considerable time of decline the fishery now appears to have stabilized with scientific advice indicating there is an equal probability of the stock declining or recovering at current catch levels. Members are taking effective measures to limit catches to appropriate levels consistent with this advice despite the economic pressures to do otherwise. Including Indonesia, where the catch is under active monitoring and a bilateral relationship exists with the CCSBT, almost 100% of the fishery is being monitored. Members' catches, which are being managed, comprise about 90% of the total reported catch.

The CCSBT's strategy is to continue with this line of approach to management and conservation of the fishery as a manageable strategy and to extend those practices to incorporate broader considerations when the existing uncertainties in the fishery are better understood.

### IATTC

The IATTC has always been conscious of the need to take account of the effect of the fishery on species other than the targets of the fishery, as its Convention refers to the need to make investigations into other fish taken by tuna fishing vessels. This was extended to other species in 1978 when the Commission agreed to adopt objectives relating to dolphins.

A by-catch working group was established at the 58<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Commission in 1997. A by-catch resolution was adopted in June 2000, which, *inter alia*, required that purse-seine vessels release of all non-target species to the extent practical, and the development of a research program to avoid by-catch. It also required the development of programs to collect information from longline and other vessels which are not covered by the purse-seine observer program. The resolutions and agreements concerning catches of non-target species have provided incentives to reduce mortality of other non-target species, particularly dolphins and sea turtles.

The 1999 declaration on strengthening the objectives and operation of the Convention establishing the IATTC, and the subsequent negotiations to amend the Convention, specifically recognize concepts of sustainable development and the ecosystem approach.

Starting from June 2002, a regular report dealing with the effects of the tuna fishery on the pelagic ecosystem is being considered by the Commission. This ensures that ecosystem considerations are a part of all management decisions.

### **IBSFC**

1. "Joint IBSFC/HELCOM Seminar on fisheries issues and environmental protection in the Baltic Sea, 20-21 February 2002 in Gdynia, Poland". (See Annex)
2. The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Baltic Sea Regional Project (which was already referred to under paragraph 53 of the Report of the Second Meeting of FAO and Non-FAO Regional Fishery Bodies or Arrangements but had been delayed) is planned to start working in February 2003.
3. See also: "Eco-system-based Management of Fisheries" UNEP Regional Seas Report and Studies No. 175, UNEP 2001, Part V B. Pioneering Work of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living resources (CCAMLR) and the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission (IBSFC); Annex 6. International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission, Definition of Sustainable Fisheries; Annex 7. International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission, Endorsement of Principles; Annex 8. International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission, Ecosystem Considerations.

### **Annex: Joint IBSFC/HELCOM Seminar on fisheries issues and environmental protection in the Baltic Sea, 20-21 February 2002 in Gdynia, Poland**

The two regional Commissions, HELCOM and IBSFC, arranged a joint seminar with the goals:

- Development of a draft concept of matters related to environmental and nature protection and sustainable fisheries, taking into account the responsibilities of the Commissions and the future cooperation between HELCOM and IBSFC;
- Possible integrated strategy for the management of the Baltic Sea area with the aim of moving towards an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management (EAFM) by including environmental and nature conservation concerns;
- Contribution to environmental and nature protection measures to support an ecosystem-based fisheries management.

### **Proposals agreed upon for joint actions:**

The Seminar is of the opinion that a further close cooperation between HELCOM and IBSFC is needed, especially in the following fields:

- a) Reduction of by-catches and discards;
- b) Development of selective fishing gears and better fishing practices;
- c) Protection of local seal populations and the possible management based on scientifically approved information on the status of the seal populations,
- d) Restoration of wild salmon stocks and other salmonids, including their spawning and nursery areas, according to the IBSFC Salmon Action Plan 1997-2010;
- e) Restoration of a common sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio* L.) population.
- f) Europe-wide measures to restore eel stocks.

- g) Initiate and promote relevant joint research projects, such as
  - monitoring of by-catch of birds, harbour porpoise and other non-target species;
  - monitoring of the harbour porpoise populations to get better understanding on the actual size of the population.
- h) Intensifying the monitoring and research, and providing for recent information on contaminant in fishes affecting the fisheries sector (e.g. dioxin).
- i) Further look into possible solutions for conflicts between fishermen, protection of seals and management of fisheries, e.g. salmon fisheries.
- j) Encourage studies on environmental impacts of offshore wind mill plants, e.g. regarding fish population, spawning grounds and on important bird areas;
- k) IBSFC and HELCOM should consult each other before submitting their contributions to “Baltic 21” in so far as it refers to matters of common interest to both Commissions. Continue to develop ecosystem status indicators.

### **ICES**

ICES is approaching the topic in various ways:

- through specific Working Groups such as the Working Group on Fishery Systems, the Working Group on Ecosystem Effects of Fishing Activities, and the Study Group on Mapping the Occurrence of Cold Water Corals;
- through annual science conference theme sessions and scientific symposia;
- through the work of the Advisory Committee on Ecosystems (ACE) – see latest ACE Report, Cooperative Research Report No. 254.

Required actions have been identified in the ICES Strategic Plan and the integrated Action Plan which stems from it (particularly under Goals 3 and 4).

These documents and others are available on the ICES website, [www.ices.dk](http://www.ices.dk).

### **IWC**

In July 2001, the IWC gave high priority to the study of interactions between whales and fish stocks by adopting Resolution 2001-9.

The primary question being addressed by its Scientific Committee is: *“How are changes in abundance of cetaceans likely to be linked (in the short term and the long term) to changes in fishery catches?”*

The Committee began its work (in June 2002) with a small specialist workshop that examined existing ecosystem modelling approaches, data requirements, assumptions and limitations and their applicability to cetacean/fishery interactions. Despite recent advances, for no system are we in a position, in terms of data availability and model development, to be able to provide ‘predictive’ management advice on the impact of cetaceans on fisheries or fisheries on cetaceans. To reach such a position will require a major investment in time and resources.

The Workshop agreed that it would be better to work on this issue in co-operation with other international bodies, given the vast amount of data and knowledge of non-cetacean species needed. Simulation studies will be required to test the sensitivity of predictions to uncertainty in the data, model assumptions and the ability of field techniques to detect the reliability of predictions. The iterative link between modelling and data requirements requires further investigation. The experience of the Scientific Committee in such work might represent a valuable IWC contribution to co-operative studies, in addition to providing cetacean data and expertise.

### **MRC**

The MRC Fisheries Programme forms one of five sector programmes within the intergovernmental body Mekong River Commission. The development objective of the Fisheries Programme is: *“Coordinated and sustainable development, utilisation, management and conservation of the fisheries of the Mekong Basin.”* The Fisheries Programme focuses on four interlinked thematic areas: 1) Fisheries Ecology and Impact Assessment, 2) Enhancing Livelihoods, 3) Fisheries Management and 4) Communication. This division should be seen on the background of 1)

the capture fisheries and aquaculture are interlinked in the Lower Mekong Basin, 2) the sector interacts with other sectors and 3) the outcome of the sector is essential for people's livelihoods.

The Fisheries Programme has from its start in 1993 had close relationship with FAO. FAO participates in the Annual Meetings of the Fisheries Programme and in the yearly Technical Symposium. In addition, the two organizations have since the Second Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies had 3 joint events: (1) *Expert consultation on improvement of Inland Capture Fishery Statistics in the Mekong Basin in 2-5 September 2002, Udon Thani, Thailand* (2) *“Regional Donor Consultation on the Role of Aquaculture and Living Aquatic Resources: Priorities for Support and Networking in Manila, Philippines November 26-28”*, and lately (3) *“Large River Symposium 2 (LARS 2), February 11-14 2003, Phnom Penh, Cambodia”*

Although all the events had implications for an ecosystem approach, the event that encompassed many ecosystem considerations was the LARS 2. Its objectives were to:

- provide for people working on the management and development of rivers a forum to review and synthesize the current status of large rivers systems, covering topics such as ecology, fisheries, environmental impact assessments, multiple uses of resources and associated socio-economic considerations;
- raise the political, public and scientific awareness of the importance of river systems, the living aquatic resources they support and the people that depend upon them; and
- contribute to better management, conservation and restoration of the living aquatic resources of large rivers.

The first preliminary conclusions from the symposium include<sup>1</sup>: **1)** Most river basins support intensive fisheries and yields in some basins are still increasing, although changes do occur in species composition with a transition from large to small fish. **2)** No proven cases of the fishery as a whole having collapsed from fishing pressure alone. Where collapses have occurred this is universally associated with declines in environmental quality. Declines have led to a reduction in the quality and quantity of catches, including a loss of biodiversity. **3)** Valuation of inland fisheries is generally inadequate. Socio-economic approaches and livelihood analysis can help to highlight and understand the contribution of fisheries to rural livelihoods. Better valuation of living river resources is essential for equitable and sustainable management and for proper placing of the fishery in the context of the many other uses of rivers. **4)** It has become increasingly clear that most river fisheries are not effectively managed. The centralized management pattern has failed worldwide. Improvements include involvement of stakeholders in various to collaborative management processes. **5)** In light of the critical importance of river fisheries the Symposium a) calls on the 3rd World Water Forum to recognize the essential role of river fisheries in providing food security in poor societies, and to adopt mechanisms to include river fisheries into water use plans; b) calls on the 3rd World Water Forum to adopt the ecosystem approach to management that would see rivers managed in a more resilient manner to provide benefits for both people and nature; c) calls on the 2003 World Parks Congress and the 2004 Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of Parties to urgently consider how to stem and reverse the decline in riverine biodiversity.

A brochure summarizing the findings and recommendations of LARS 2 is currently being printed. It will be widely circulated, and is freely available for other organizations to use. The papers and syntheses from the Symposium will be published as Proceedings (available as hard copy and electronically at [www.lars2.org](http://www.lars2.org)) and as papers in the scientific journal Fisheries Management and Ecology.

## NASCO

The Atlantic salmon, with its dependence on freshwater, estuarine and marine ecosystems, is subject to a wide range of pressures which are being addressed through international cooperation within NASCO.

### **A. Ecosystem effects of fishing**

In response to concerns about stock status, fisheries for Atlantic salmon have been greatly reduced over the last 20 years, particularly in the sea. Under a Decision Structure adopted in 2002 harvests will, in future, be based on reference points or other measures of abundance and diversity.

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<sup>1</sup> Final statement will be issued shortly.

By-catch of non-target species in salmon fishing gear is thought to be generally low. By-catch of salmon in gear set for other species in coastal waters is known to occur but it is not generally a problem. However, there is concern about the possible by-catch of salmon post-smolts in pelagic fisheries, particularly for mackerel, in the Norwegian Sea. There may be an opportunity for collaboration on this issue with the other RFBs with competence in the North Atlantic. 'Ghost fishing' by lost or abandoned salmon nets is not thought to be a problem.

## **B. Habitat Protection and Restoration**

Salmon habitat in fresh water has been greatly affected by various activities (e.g. hydro-electric development, industrial pollution) although progress has been made in recent years in restoring some severely impacted rivers. Recently NASCO has adopted a Plan of Action for Habitat Protection and Restoration with the objective of maintaining and, where possible, increasing the productive capacity of the resource. NASCO has adopted a number of agreements in relation to minimizing the impacts of aquaculture and of introductions and transfers on the wild salmon stocks.

In response to concern about the reduced marine survival of Atlantic salmon NASCO has established an International Cooperative Salmon Research Board to coordinate a programme of research designed to increase understanding of the marine phase of salmon. We are cooperating with a number of RFBs, in the North Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and Baltic Sea, and there may be opportunities to further enhance this cooperation in future.

### **NEAFC**

In the wake of the Reykjavík Conference on Responsible Fishing in the Marine Ecosystem, ecosystem considerations have risen up the agenda.

The NEAFC Commission has included the Ecosystem Approach on its agenda for the last three meetings in November 2001, April 2002 and November 2002. On these occasions, attention has been drawn to ongoing discussions in FAO, the North Atlantic Conference on Regional Cooperation on the Conservation and Management of Living Marine Resources and the Marine Environment<sup>2</sup>, the Reykjavík Conference on Responsible Fishing in the Marine Ecosystem, discussions in the Nordic Council of Ministers and at the 5<sup>th</sup> North Atlantic Fisheries Ministers' Conferences and the fisheries administrations of NEAFC's Contracting Parties.<sup>3</sup>

The four main NEAFC fisheries and ecosystem concerns

The four major fisheries in the NEAFC Regulatory Area - pelagic fishery for redfish, Norwegian spring spawning (Atlanto-Scandian) herring, mackerel and blue whiting, are relatively simple with respect to their impact on ecosystems.

They are all pelagic fisheries, pursued with pelagic trawls or purse seines, and target species account for close to 100% of catches. They are pursued by large vessels run by companies under market conditions. Three of them are assessed as fished at precautionary, sustainable levels of fishing mortality.

If these fisheries are managed according to the precautionary approach, the risk of overfishing is low – with a correspondingly low risk of irreversible or slowly reversible effects on ecosystems. This applies in most cases to all parts of the eco-system. These large pelagic stocks play an important role by transporting energy from plankton into fish assemblages between areas and in to deep waters.

In November 2002 NEAFC decided to take on the management of deep-sea species. The situation in these fisheries is quite different. In deep-sea fisheries long-lines, bottom trawls, semi-pelagic trawls and bottom gill nets, which can affect demersal habitats, are used and some of these fisheries are very mixed. Fishing mortality exerted by deep-sea fleets on deep-sea stocks is not known. To place the management of these species into an ecosystem context, considerably more knowledge is required.

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<sup>2</sup> Held in Tórshavn, Faroe Islands 21-22 June 2001

<sup>3</sup> Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Community, Iceland, Norway, Poland and the Russian Federation.