

FORWARD

The marine fisheries of West Africa, the area covered by the IDAF Programme, have for a long time been characterized by the co-existence of small-scale (artisanal) and large-scale (industrial) fisheries. Both fisheries tend to interact not only in a biological sense but also economically and physically. Sometimes these interactions degenerate into conflicts between the two sub-sectors, and occasionally conflicts occur within the artisanal fisheries independent of the industrial sub-sector.

Conflicts in the exploitation of fisheries resources are due primarily to the common property characteristics of the resource and the phenomenon of free access/entry. However in some cases, national policies in respect to industrialisation and/or the issuance of fishing licences to foreign fleets have also contributed in increasing the number of conflicts. Recent developments, if not improvements, in small-scale fisheries (for example fishermen now have equipment with better autonomy) have made it possible for fishermen to fish in distant areas, fishing grounds that were not traditionally accessible to artisanal fishing crafts.

The IDAF Programme conscious of the need to awaken public opinion on the importance of conflicts in coastal fisheries while at the same time encourage the exchange of experience between its partners, requested national experts from six countries of the region to undertake case studies on the subject in their respective countries. The countries concern are : Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana and Senegal. These case studies served as the basis of reflection for a "Workshop on Conflicts in Coastal Fisheries in West Africa", which was held in Cotonou, Benin from 24 - 26 November 1993, as a follow up to IDAF Seventh Liaison Officers Meeting.

Twenty nine cadres from 19 of the 20 countries covered by the Programme participated at the workshop. They reviewed the various case studies, analyzed the situation in their different countries and made a number of recommendations. The present document contains both the main report of the workshop and the six case studies that were presented.

We hope that this report will contribute in creating awareness among competent authorities and all those involved in the development of fisheries in West Africa as to the importance and extent of the issue and that our readers will find in the report recommendations that could be adapted to local conditions.

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