

## **POST-EVALUATION STUDY OF THE IOFC: GULFS COMMITTEE**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI), which was established on 26 February 2001 to succeed the Committee for the Development and Management of the Fishery Resources of the Gulfs, a subsidiary body of the Indian Ocean Fishery Commission (IOFC: Gulfs Committee), held its First Session in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman from 6-8 October 2001. One of the recommendations of the Session called for the preparation of a Study to deal with the Post-Evaluation of the Commission's predecessor, the Gulfs Committee. The purpose of the Study is to use the lessons learned from the experience of the Gulfs Committee to strengthen the future work of RECOFI, to build upon what was achieved by the Gulfs Committee, to avoid some of the shortcomings and minimize the constraints experienced by the Committee.

2. To implement the above recommendation, the FAO recruited the Consultant Mr. Izzat H. Feidi, an FAO retiree and a former Secretary of the Gulfs Committee, to carry out the Post-Evaluation Study. The time frame given to complete this task was from 19 November 2001 to 31 January 2002.

3. At the conclusion of the Post-Evaluation, the resulting document is intended to be issued as an FAO Fisheries Circular to be widely disseminated to fisheries institutions in the area covered by the now defunct Gulfs Committee, and to international institutions, particularly relevant regional fisheries bodies and arrangements.

4. The Post-Evaluation Study will provide a brief account of the developments that led to the establishment of the Gulfs Committee, as a sub-regional body to the Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission, and later led to the establishment of RECOFI. It will also analyse the participation of the eight Member States and interested Observers in the various Sessions during the 28 years of its existence. It will do so by highlighting achievements, shortcomings and constraints which emerged during the process of developing and managing the fisheries resources of the area covered by the Gulfs Committee. The Study reviews the agendas that contained the major issues raised in the various Sessions of the Committee, the decisions taken, the follow-up of the implementation of the decisions, the role and effectiveness of the Working Groups and Technical and Expert Consultations, and it analyses all of these for their relevance for RECOFI.

5. The Study also highlights the impact of global fisheries issues on the fisheries of the area. In the concluding remarks, lessons learned are identified to serve as a guide for improving the effectiveness of RECOFI in its task of developing and managing of the fisheries in the area. The Study closes with a number of suggested recommendations designed to strengthen the activities of RECOFI.

## II. TERMS OF REFERENCE

6. The Terms of Reference as given to the Consultant are as follows:

Generally, the Consultant shall, in collaboration with and under the supervision of the Senior Fisheries Officer, FAO Regional Office for the Near East, Cairo, Egypt, and as appropriate, with other staff at RNE, the FAO Fisheries Department and the Legal Office, conduct a Post-Evaluation of the activities of the Committee for the Development and Management of the Fishery Resources of the Gulfs (Gulfs Committee) of the Indian Ocean Fishery Commission.

Specifically, the Consultant shall:

- i) Briefly review the role and purpose of the Gulfs Committee, the events that led to its establishment, its Agreement, decision-making process and other pertinent considerations (including Appendices showing dates of Sessions, Chairmanship of Sessions, etc.)
- ii) Analyse participation by Members in the work of the Committee.
- iii) Address the forces that shaped the work of the Committee and the role and purpose of existing regional and sub-regional fishery bodies or arrangements in the region.
- iv) Analyse the contents of the agendas and session reports since the establishment of the Committee and review the issues that have been addressed, highlighting trends in issues, decisions taken, and follow-ups to the implementation of decisions. As part of the analysis show how international events in fisheries have conditioned deliberations and the taking, or not taking, of particular decisions. This analysis should include the role played by the Gulfs Committee in influencing important regional fisheries issues, including *inter alia*, the Compliance Agreement, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and Agenda 21.
- v) Review the manner in which scientific and technical advice provided by the Committee has been used by States and regional and sub-regional fisheries organizations/arrangements in the region. Further identify procedures likely to improve that role by the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI), which has replaced the Gulfs Committee, with particular reference to regional fisheries organizations.

## III. BACKGROUND

7. The eight Member States which comprised the membership of the Gulfs Committee, namely, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates, had a total population in mid- 2000 of 120.8 million people and cover an area of about 4.6 million sq. km. Population densities range from about 10 people per sq. km. in Saudi Arabia to about 1,125 people in Bahrain. Annual population growth is between 2 and 3.6 percent with an average of about 2.7 percent. This is a considerably higher rate than those of developed countries and marginally higher than in other developing regions of the world. As oil-producing countries, the average per capita income is generally high, US\$ 10,084 (1998) (Table I).

8. Small-scale fisheries in all the Member States dominate the fishing industry. Generally, the fishing boats are small. Mechanization with inboard and outboard engines has become quite common. For the most part traditional fishing methods are used except for a few semi-industrial fishing operations that take place in some of the countries. Total marine fish landings in 1999 from the marine area under consideration are estimated at about 508,000 tonnes. Fish from fresh water resources and aquaculture are only landed in Iraq and Iran. Limited aquaculture activities on an experimental basis, and some on a commercial basis, are carried out in all member countries. The average per capita fish consumption, in the area varies greatly. It ranges between less than 1 kg./annum in Iraq to 45.3 kg./annum in Oman, with a general average of 4.1 kg./annum. (Table I)

9. Until the late 1960s, the area lacked an institutional framework under which a meaningful programme for the development and management of the fisheries sector could be established. The FAO began to carry out stock assessments in the region with the objective of promoting fishery development and the management of fisheries resources. These stock assessments were, however, carried out mainly on a regional basis, although some were carried out on national basis.

10. It was in this context that, a major programme, the “Indian Ocean Fishery Survey and Development Programme” (IOP) was established. Under its auspices three projects or sub-programmes were instituted: “The Fishery Survey and Development Project”, “The Development of Fisheries in Areas of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Programme”, and “The Pelagic Fish Assessment Survey of the North Arabian Sea”. All three programmes had several components and activities that were carried out on a regional basis.

#### **IV. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INDIAN OCEAN FISHERY COMMISSION (IOFC)**

11. In 1967, FAO established the Indian Ocean Fishery Commission (IOFC) under Article VI-1 of its Constitution. Three priorities for action were identified: improvement of fishery statistics; management of heavily exploited stocks; and development of international programmes in the Indian Ocean region. It proposed the establishment of IOP, with the aim of “increasing knowledge of the resources of the Indian Ocean as a whole, but particularly of those stocks which offered opportunities for early economic development by the countries in the area itself, to study all aspects of their utilization, to identify obstacles to development and to plan remedial action”.

12. The IOP, which maintained its headquarters in FAO, Rome, commenced its operations in 1973 after a two year preparatory period. The Programme was extended into three phases ending in 1979, with an overall budget of about US\$7.5 million funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In all, forty-six countries were members of the Programme, which was the first of FAO’s interregional fishery development and management programmes. These countries included all the eight Member States of the Gulfs Committee.

13. The long-range objectives of the IOP were to increase the contribution of fisheries to the social and economic welfare of the countries bordering the Indian Ocean, particularly by making more food available, improving the standard of living

of fishing communities, and earning foreign exchange. The immediate purpose was to help those countries to achieve a coordinated and sustained development of their fisheries resources and to promote the rational utilization and management of these resources.

14. During the course of the IOP's implementation, it became apparent that activities in the area might be more efficiently delivered on a sub-regional basis. Many neighbouring groups of countries shared common stocks of fish, had common problems and opportunities, or had other natural affinities both socially and culturally. With this realisation, the IOP was decentralized through the development of several sub-regional activities.

15. In 1982 the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea adopted the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provided a new framework for the better management of marine resources. The new legal regime for the oceans gave coastal states rights and responsibilities for the management and use of fishery resources within their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). Subsequently, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), at its Nineteenth Session in 1991, called for the development of new concepts, which would lead to responsible, sustainable fisheries.

16. As a result of these new concepts, two fishery bodies were established to deal with the conservation and management of tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean: The Western Indian Ocean Tuna Organization (WIOTO), which was established in 1994, and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), which came into being in 1996.

17. With the establishment of the IOTC to manage tuna and tuna-like species throughout the Indian Ocean, one of the main tasks of the IOFC was removed and its Committee on the Management of Indian Ocean Tuna became obsolete. Under these changing circumstances, it became necessary also to consider managing stocks other than tuna and tuna-like species at the sub-regional level, and to seek a new role for the existing IOFC. However, other problems beset the IOFC, such as its financing difficulties and low attendance by Members at its meetings. This led the Commission Members to decide, at their Eleventh Session, held in Rome on 17 February 1997, that the Commission should cease to exist. With regard to its subsidiary body, the Gulfs Committee, the consensus of opinion available to FAO was that the Gulfs Committee be transformed into a separate commission for the region.

## **V. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IOFC: GULFS COMMITTEE**

18. The IOFC at its Third Session held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1972 created the Gulfs Committee as a subsidiary committee to coordinate and advise on the activities of the Fishery Survey and Development Project (Gulfs Project), which was established as an offshoot of the IOP to serve the eight States that comprised the membership of the Gulfs Committee. The Project itself became operational in May 1975 after a period of Preparatory Assistance in 1974. The Project was completed in December 1979. The total cost of the Project was US\$7.2 million, shared between the participating countries (US\$6.1 million) and UNDP (US\$1.1 million). The Project had its headquarters in Doha, Qatar.

19. The Gulfs Committee was given the following terms of reference:

- i) To keep under review and to advise the Commission, and through it the governments concerned, on fishery development and management in the Gulfs and, in particular:
  - to identify opportunities for fishery development and to specify the steps required to implement such development, and
  - to identify fishery management needs in both Gulfs and to specify the steps required to implement such management;
- ii) To consult, as required, with nations that are not members of the Commission, subject to the relevant provisions of the Basic Texts of FAO;
- iii) To report to the Commission, at each session, its activities during the preceding intersessional period; and
- iv) To hold meetings as necessary to carry out its responsibilities, but preferably in association with the Commission's Sessions.

20. After the termination of the Gulfs Project (1979), the Gulfs Committee continued as a subsidiary body of the IOFC. It held, although intermittently, nine regular sessions. The First Session was held in June 1975 in Kuwait and the Ninth Session was held in Sharjah, U.A.E., in April 1997. It also held three Ad Hoc Sessions, mainly to discuss the future of the Committee in the light of the abolition of the IOFC, and to decide on its successor, the Regional Commission for Fisheries, (RECOFI). The List of Regular and Ad Hoc Sessions is in Appendix A.

21. The proposal for restructuring the IOFC had implications for the Gulfs Committee as a subsidiary body of the IOFC. In view of this, the Committee, during its Eighth Session held in Muscat, Oman, in December 1994, noted that the proposed restructuring of the IOFC included the establishment of a "North-west Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission", as an Article XIV body under the FAO Constitution. The proposed Commission would cover all the Gulfs in the region, the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea. It also noted that such a body would have real management powers.

22. However, the Committee expressed concern regarding the financial implications of restructuring IOFC and it requested more information on the proposed new Commission. It also recognized the advantages that could be gained if neighbouring countries were included, because of the existence of shared stocks and their assessment. However, the Gulfs Committee wanted its integrity to be assured under any new arrangements.

23. At the Ninth Session, held in Sharjah, U.A.E. in April 1997, further information on the proposed restructuring of the IOFC was supplied and it seemed logical that a Fishery Commission for the North-West Indian Ocean be created. However, the biological characteristics of the fish stocks of the three geographically distinct water bodies, the Gulf<sup>1</sup>, the Gulfs of Oman and Aden, and the Arabian Sea, and the Red Sea, created the possibility of having subsidiary bodies dealing with the fisheries of the three specific areas..

24. Under such an arrangement, the managerial decisions of the three sub-commissions would be taken by their Members and not by the Commission. Alternatively, separate commissions could be established for these three areas;

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<sup>1</sup> The Gulf between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Arabian Peninsula.

however, this would have additional financial implications for FAO. This alternative would transform the Gulfs Committee into a new Commission under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution, and provide it with a new management mandate, an autonomous budget, new areas of competence, and the possibility of enhanced powers and flexibility.

## **VI. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI)**

25. At its Ninth Session (Sharjah 1997), the Gulfs Committee was told that a final decision would be required from it as to the future of the Committee in the event of the parent Commission, the IOFC, being dissolved. To facilitate this process, it was agreed that a Technical Consultation be held at the RNE Offices in Cairo, Egypt to discuss a paper, to be prepared by the FAO Secretariat, presenting five possible options. These were:

1. Maintaining the status of the Committee;
2. Abolishing the Committee alongside IOFC;
3. Upgrading the Committee to Commission level under Article VI of the FAO Constitution;
4. Upgrading the Committee to a Commission level under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution, and;
5. Establishing the Committee as an independent body outside the FAO framework but having links to FAO.

26. An Ad Hoc Session was held at the FAO Regional Office for the Near East (RNE) in Cairo, Egypt, from 1-2 December 1997. After a very constructive debate, the Consultation, by consensus, decided that the Gulfs Committee should be converted into an Article XIV body under the FAO Constitution, i.e. option (4) above. The Consultation also requested the Secretariat to draft an Agreement to be circulated to member countries by the end of March 1998. Furthermore, it was agreed to hold the Technical Meeting, provided for in Article XIV, Paragraph 3(a) of the Constitution to discuss the Draft Agreement.

27. The Technical Consultation was held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, from 3-5 May 1998. After lengthy discussions, the Draft Agreement to establish the new body under Article XIV was adopted. The Secretariat, however, was requested to seek the opinion of the respective governments regarding the name and the financial arrangements for the new Commission. The Secretariat suggested to the prospective member countries possible names and following consultations, it was proposed to name it the "Regional Commission for Fisheries" (RECOFI). This name did not fully identify the new body with the region, but nevertheless it reflected, under the circumstances, a reasonable compromise. Initially the Member States did not commit themselves to any financial obligations. The Secretariat pointed out that a core budget would be needed to implement certain important activities for the conservation and management of the living resources in the area. In practical terms, when the Member States accepted to convert the Gulfs Committee into a Commission under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution, they had also accepted to contribute to an autonomous budget financed by them. The expenses of the part-time Secretariat would be covered by FAO, making it a semi-independent Commission. FAO would continue to provide

technical and legal assistance. The Secretary would be appointed by the FAO Director-General and would be administratively responsible to him.

28. The FAO Council, at its Hundred and Sixteenth Session held in June 1999, abolished the IOFC and all its subsidiary bodies, including the Gulfs Committee (Resolution 1/116). The Secretariat, in accordance with the above Resolution, proposed to Members to hold an Ad Hoc Meeting to discuss major issues of concern, to draw up a future Programme of Work, and a Budget for the next few years. The secretariat proposed this meeting in order to commence the work of RECOFI ahead of the Agreement formally entering into force. It was agreed to hold the meeting at RNE, Cairo, from 3-6 April 2000. It was also agreed that fisheries research institutions, fishery faculties of interested universities, and appropriate regional fishery management organizations should be invited as Observers. (Appendix A)

29. The FAO Council, at its Hundred and Seventeenth Session, (Rome, 9 - 11 November 1999), approved the text of the Agreement for the Establishment of the RECOFI. The Agreement was circulated subsequently to the FAO Members entitled to join the Commission.

30. , Some prospective member countries agreed in principle to the establishment of RECOFI but requested that there should be no financial obligations arising out of membership. After consideration by a working group established by the Ad Hoc Session held in Cairo, Egypt 3-6 April 2000, it was proposed that RECOFI should have an annual core budget of US\$40,000 and that its eight Members should contribute equal amounts of US\$5,000 annually. The core budget would cover expenses relating to the organization of meetings of the Commission, the publication of reports, studies and reviews mandated by the Commission, and reports of workshops.

31. By the time the First Session of RECOFI was convened in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, 6-8 October 2001, the Agreement for the Establishment of the Regional Commission for Fisheries had entered into force. This happened in February 2001. The Member States reaffirmed their commitment that each member would make an annual contribution of US\$5,000 to the core budget, to be deposited in a Trust Fund Account established at FAO. (Report of the First Session of RECOFI)

32. The FAO Secretariat of the Gulfs Committee, which had been transferred from RNE in Cairo in January 1997 to FAO Headquarters in Rome, as a result of the transfer of its Secretary, was transferred back to RNE in Cairo in January 2000. RECOFI, in effect, replaces the former Gulfs Committee. As the geographical area covered by RECOFI is an area under the mandate of RNE, Cairo, the seat of the Secretariat returned to RNE as required by Article II-5 of the RECOFI Agreement.

## **VII. ANALYSIS OF MEMBER STATES PARTICIPATION IN THE GULFS COMMITTEE**

33. In the course of preparing this study, the Consultant visited seven of the eight Member States to discuss with the Fisheries Authorities in each State the activities of the Gulfs Committee. This was done both to glean from them lessons of the experience of the Gulfs Committee and learn what expectations they had of RECOFI. A questionnaire was sent to Member States in advance of the visit for their

consideration. This helped focus the discussions, the results of which appear in the relevant sections of the Study together with the responses to the questionnaire. Only specific and distinctive comments made by each State visited are provided in this Section of the Study. The questionnaire, the travel itinerary and a list of officials met, are included in Appendices B and C respectively. Participation of Member States in the various Sessions appears in Table II.

### **1. Muscat, Oman: 4-6 January 2002**

- Oman's participation in the work of the Gulfs Committee was very visible. It attended all but the First of the Ninth Regular Sessions and all the three Ad Hoc Sessions. It hosted the Eighth Session and also the Expert Consultation on Myctophides Fishery Management.
- Oman felt that the Gulfs Committee had achieved something, especially after the formation of the Working Groups. However, these Groups, particularly the Statistics Working Group, had not yet achieved as much as they might have done. A uniform system for collecting data is needed. Also the Working Group on Shrimp should agree on the fishing seasons. Oman is concerned with its pelagic resources, especially the Spanish mackerel. It appears that the waters of both Oman and the Yemen have more than one stock. It was pointed out that there was an ongoing study of this stock with the GCC and the Yemen.
- Oman felt that a lack of funding for trawl surveys has been a major obstacle to studying the various stocks and believes that both regional and bilateral cooperation is desirable in the study of joint stocks.
- At present Oman is establishing a fisheries training centre, as a way of building up its national cadre of qualified and internationally certified fishermen. It has also established a quality control centre for fish and fishery products. This centre is to be inaugurated in February/March 2002. Oman would welcome regional cooperation in the training of fishermen and in quality control, and would welcome trainees from the region. It is to be noted that 20 Omani fishing companies are now on the European Union's (E.U.) List A for the exportation of fish and fishery products. The Omani Government is also taking action in compliance with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (The Code) with regard to fishing gear, training, quality control and a new fisheries law to regulate the sector.
- Finally, Oman feels that FAO has done its part well in servicing the Gulfs Committee and believes that any shortcomings are due more to a lack of competent personnel in the region in general and the bureaucracy in the Member States.

### **2. Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran: 6-8 January 2002**

- Iran was very active in the Gulfs Committee throughout its existence.. It attended all but the Third and Fourth of the regular Sessions and all three ad hoc meetings. It also hosted the Seventh Session, provided a venue for three of the ten meetings of the Working Groups and, on various occasions, offered to host other meetings of the Working Groups. It has also offered to host the Regional Database Centre and/or the Aquaculture Information Centre, without cost to the Commission. Its delegations to the meetings



were of a high calibre, were well prepared for the discussions and provided the meetings with well-documented national reports. It also provided very constructive suggestions for the advancing the work of the Gulfs Committee.

- However, Iran takes the view that the achievements of the Gulfs Committee were limited, except for the implementation of the regional plan for stock assessment (i.e. the programme executed under the Gulfs Project 1975-1979) and the holding of some technical meetings by Working Groups, which were initiated in 1992.
- Iran feels that there are many opportunities for regional cooperation and the implementation of joint research projects. It again offered its facilities and expertise to the other Member States but points out that similar offers in the past but were not taken up and that several agreements reached were not implemented. It also felt that the FAO's implementation of the agreed proposals had not been very effective due to the obstacles mentioned.
- Iran notes that the main barriers to the achievement of the Gulfs Committee's objectives were the lack of a mechanism to follow up on agreements made; the lack of sufficient motivation on the part of some countries in the region; the lack of sufficient information on fisheries issues among participants at particular meetings; and the domination of regional political and military conflicts, which prevented friendly ties among the States.
- For RECOFI to be more effective, a full time secretariat would be needed to follow-up the work of the Commission. Iran also felt that, to be successful, the above constraints should be eliminated.

- **3. Dubai, United Arab Emirates: 8-10 January 2002**

- The United Arab Emirates had been quite active in the work of the Committee. It attended seven of the nine regular Sessions and all three ad hoc meetings. It also hosted the Ninth Session and attended several of the Working Group meetings.
- U.A.E. thinks that the Gulfs Committee did not achieve tangible results, except for the convening of its regular Sessions, the exchange of some information during these Sessions, and the formation of Working Groups on demersals, fisheries statistics, shrimp and aquaculture. The activities of these Groups, in turn, were limited due to a lack of continuity in cooperation. The Committee also failed to use the media to publicize its activities on the local and regional levels.
- The U.A.E. takes the view that the most significant constraint hindering implementation of agreed proposals was the lack of funding and the consequent inability of the FAO Secretariat to follow-up on the implementation of agreements. Cooperation between Members was weak, slow, and below expectation. The Committee could not establish positive cooperation in fisheries matters with other regional and sub-regional bodies, such as the GCC and ROPME. Furthermore, the Committee did not contribute to an understanding of The Code or to any other scientific issues. The Working Groups made a limited contribution to an understanding their

subject areas. The Gulfs Committee was not supportive of national fisheries institutions in the Member States.

- With Regard to the future, U.A.E. feels that RECOFI should carry out resource surveys, as a contribution to better conservation of resources; hold training courses in various fields of fisheries; establish a regional fisheries centre to train trainers and fishermen and raise awareness of good fishing practices; establish a regional fisheries database; make extensive use of the media to spread awareness of the Commission's contribution; study the negative effects of mariculture; and help Member States implement quality standards for fish and fish products required for their exportation to EU.
- Finally, the U.A.E. expects that funding of activities of RECOFI should come from FAO or other sources. These should be identified and pursued by the FAO Secretariat of the Commission.

#### **4. Kuwait: 10-13 January 2002**

- Kuwait's participation in the activities of the Gulfs Committee started by hosting the Committee's First Session in June 1975. It attended all regular Sessions except the Eighth Session. Officially it did not attend the three ad hoc Sessions, which followed the Regular Sessions, but was represented by KISR as an Observer in the Eighth Session and the Third ad hoc Session.
- Kuwait felt that the Gulfs Committee's Sessions achieved some success, especially through the work of the Working Groups. However, the follow-up of the recommendations was less than adequate. It was pointed out that FAO technical follow-up of the recommendations was not carried out due to the very busy schedule of the Technical Secretary of the Marine Fisheries Working Groups who could not devote more time to each Working Group. It was also pointed out that the Members bore part of the responsibility for this failure by not doing their part.
- Funding activities in the future seems to be the main obstacle that will face RECOFI. Kuwait suggests that a project for fisheries development should be prepared and offered for funding to various potential donors. Member States are not to be expected to provide funding. The shrimp survey conducted by four Members was given as an example. Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Qatar conducted such a survey during the period from July 1998 to the end 2001 at a cost of US\$690,000 provided by the Islamic Development Fund (US\$320,000), AFESD (US\$320,000) and Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (US\$50,000). An attempt to identify funding for a demersals survey will be made along the same lines. It was hoped that IFAD would provide a contribution to this activity. (Saudi Arabia also reported that a demersals survey will be conducted on the same basis in the near future).
- It was reported that bilateral cooperation between Kuwait and Iran for a research Project on Pomfret is underway at a total cost of US\$30,000. Kuwait also welcomes the hosting of the Aquaculture Information Centre at KISR, as proposed by the GCC Fisheries Committee, at a cost of about US\$30,000. Kuwait also has no objection to hosting a marine shrimp information centre to service the Members of RECOFI.

- It was suggested that RECOFI should invite to its meetings institutions operating in the region that are working in related fisheries areas such as the Wild Life Commission in U.A.E., the Bahrain Centre for Studies and Research, KISR and fisheries related faculties from local universities.

#### **5. Doha, Qatar: 3-15 January 2002**

- Qatar hosted the headquarters of the Gulfs Project between 1975 to 1979. It also hosted the largest number of regular Sessions of the Gulfs Committee. These were the Second, Third and Fourth Sessions in 1979, 1980 and 1982 respectively. It attended all other Sessions, except the Sixth, and attended the first two of the ad hoc Sessions, and hosted one Working Group meeting.
- Qatar feels that it has benefited from all the training courses it participated in and from the activities of the Working Groups. However, it feels that the recommendations were not adequately followed up. It believed that additional amounts should be allocated for follow-up in any future project activity, and there should be a more thorough follow-up of certain studies. Procedures for the collection of scientific and fisheries data by the Member States should be standardized and unified.
- Qatar agreed to become a member of RECOFI, but it has reservations over the payment of the annual contribution of US\$5,000. It thinks that the matter should be put forward again for discussion among Members, especially in the GCC Fisheries Committee.
- As the demarcation of the border between Qatar and Bahrain has now been settled, Qatar feels that a project for a survey of marine fisheries resources in the waters between the two States should be carried out with funding identified through FAO.

#### **6. Manama, Bahrain: 15-18 January 2002**

- Bahrain is the only member that attended all regular and ad hoc Sessions of the Gulfs Committee. It also hosted the Fifth Session and one of the Working Group meetings. On several occasions it offered to host the Regional Database Centre. It also hosted the headquarters of the INFOSAMAK Centre for a period of 14 years (1986 to 2000).
- Bahrain feels that the Committee achieved bringing researchers and administrators of the region to work together. It made the region aware of its fisheries through diverse studies, choice of venues for meetings, and the participation of outside experts. However, it failed to complete a single project after the Gulfs Project (1976-1979). It also had to deal with fisheries issues that are not familiar to the region and the advantages to the Members were limited.
- It was also noted that Bahrain gained from improving the standards of its fisheries cadre, and developing its aquaculture programmes and its expertise in this field. Bahrain felt that the objectives of the Committee were not clear, which prevented it from fulfilling several of them. The FAO Secretariat has tried hard to meet its responsibilities but the shortage of local expertise, the lack of commitment from Member States, and a lack of

understanding, at a local level, of the role of the FAO Secretariat, prevented it from doing so.

- The activities of the Working Groups were appreciated although these could not complete their work. Regarding the standardization of statistics, Bahrain feels that it would not be possible to standardize sampling procedures as each country follows its own system. However, fisheries statistics and forms could be unified and exchanged. Bahrain also felt that a regional survey should be carried out every five years. There are sufficient local scientists to carry out the job with minimal international participation, but the available local research vessels need complete rehabilitation for such work. Bahrain would like the red tide phenomenon studied under such an arrangement.
- On the future of RECOFI, Bahrain feels that major fisheries issues should be taken up on a regional level with a commitment from the Members to implement the recommendations that may arise. There is a need to increase and upgrade local expertise, including those needed to execute projects, and to improve the collection of statistics on a regional basis. , The Member States should be consulted on the agendas, and about the participation of RECOFI as an Observer in related regional and international organization.

#### **7. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: 18-20 January 2002**

- Saudi Arabia participated in all Regular Sessions, except the Third Session, and also attended all three ad hoc Sessions. While it did not have the opportunity to host any of the Sessions, it did host, however, one of the Working Groups meetings.
- While Saudi Arabia's participation was extensive in the Sessions, it points out that, in the early years of the Committee, its participation was nominal due to lack of trained personnel. However, it felt that, in the later years, such participation became more active and its fisheries personnel have gained from the activities of the Committee and have a better understanding of its role. Such a situation prevented early benefits from the work of the Committee, as there was too large a gap between the local staff and the experts, but the situation improved with better understanding.
- The role of FAO Secretariat was described as good, but there was a shortfall in the implementation of recommendations. In addition, the Committee was able to create a degree of cooperation between the Members on fisheries matters. Saudi Arabia also gained from some of the activities of the Working Groups. It also benefited from The Code by attempting to apply some of its provisions. .
- On the future of RECOFI, Saudi Arabia hopes for a strategy for its marine fisheries in the Gulf and the Red Sea. It also hopes that the work of the commission would include activities supporting the private sector engaged in producing products such as ornamental fishes, sea cucumber, cuttlefish, commercial bivalves and crab. It also feels that an exchange of information among the Members is necessary on a continuous basis. Saudi Arabia is willing to host a centre for freshwater aquaculture (shrimp and fin-fish) to service the area, since it has several activities in this field. It suggests that an exchange of experts between Member States should be attempted, and

training in sampling at various sites should be organized. A strategy to manage the region as a unit, and to control the results of this strategy, needs to be developed.

- Regarding the Red Sea, Saudi Arabia feels that RECOFI should establish contacts with the Strategic Action Programme, which is sponsored by The Regional Organization of the Red Sea and Gulf Aden (PERSGA) and funded by GEF, UNEP and UNDP. It is felt that both bodies could cooperate, especially if RECOFI extends its mandate and activities to the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

#### **8. Iraq:**

- Iraq, the eighth Member of the Gulfs Committee, was not visited during the Consultant's field visits to the Member States. However, it is to be pointed out that Iraq's participation during the lifetime of the Committee was restricted to attending only five of the nine regular Sessions and none of the ad hoc Sessions. (See Table II). Furthermore, it did not host any of the meetings. Iraq has not yet signed the Agreement to become a member of RECOFI.

### **VIII. RELEVANCE AND CONTENTS OF AGENDAS OF SESSIONS AND TECHNICAL CONSULTATIONS**

34. The Terms of Reference of the Gulfs Committee at its establishment were very broad. The Committee was expected in particular:

- i. To identify opportunities for fisheries developments in the Gulfs and to specify steps required to implement such development; and
- ii. To identify fishery management needs and to specify the steps required for implementing such management.

With this in mind, the agendas, which were mostly proposed by the FAO Secretariat, reflected mainly the fishery issues that were relevant at the time of holding each Session.

35. The Gulfs Committee, after its establishment in 1972, held only two sessions during the rest of the decade. The First Session met in June 1975, while the Second Session met in September 1979. The main activity of the Committee was to follow-up on the implementation of the Gulfs Project, which was a Project for the same states as were Members of the Committee. However, since the Committee in 1975 established a Coordinating Sub-Committee to follow-up on the Project, it was not found necessary to hold meetings of the main Gulfs Committee. However, as the Project was due to terminate in December 1979, it became necessary for the Gulfs Committee to once again become the most appropriate mechanism for regional cooperation in fisheries in the area. At the Second Session, the Committee reviewed its Terms of Reference and agreed that its functions regarding fishery management and development were sufficiently broad. With regards to the frequency of its Sessions, the Committee agreed that it should meet in principle once a year, and more often if this proved to be necessary. This, however, did not materialize.

36. In all agendas of the Sessions (see Appendix D) convened by the Committee, there were regular items that dealt with intersessional activities, the state of the

fisheries resources and other matters. Each Session reflected the main issues of major concern at the time as well as reports on activities of Working Groups or specific proposals put forward by the FAO Secretariat. For example, in the Second Session, the main issues of concern, which topped the agenda, dealt with the management of shrimp stocks, this being a major issue at the time. Action on the national and regional levels was called for. FAO was mostly concerned with the results of the deliberations in order to assess the type of technical support that would be required.

37. The agenda of the First Session, which was held in Kuwait on 18 June 1975, contained only three items. One dealt with the Terms of Reference and proposed activities of the Gulfs Committee, the establishment of a Coordinating Sub-Committee to monitor the operations of the Gulfs Project, and some aspects of the shrimp fishery. Being the first time the Committee met, the general discussion was mostly of an introductory nature. However, when discussing the status of the shrimp fishery, it became apparent that there was a great need for information, not only on the shrimp, but also on the other fisheries resources. It was noted, however, that this was one of the objectives of the Gulfs Project. The available data was described as scanty and fragmentary.

38. Furthermore, in other parts of the world, the FAO, at the time, was promoting intergovernmental cooperation in fishery management and development. It did so on the basis that fish stocks are often shared by the coastal states, that states may face common problems, or because of the complementary character of their economies, or the existence of cultural affinities.

39. In order to avoid serious dilution of effort, the FAO decided to seek the establishment of a "Technical Support Unit", possibly funded by UNDP, to follow up on the fisheries of the Gulfs Committee after the Gulfs Project was terminated. The "Unit" was expected to implement the recommendations of the Project. However, during the Third Session held in September 1980, financial support from UNDP was provided only for a shrimp management expert, rather than a full team of experts in various fields of competence. The absence of a full "Unit" has hindered the implementation of a number of the important recommendations of the Project.

40. The lack of an institutional arrangement to follow up on agreed activity undoubtedly had a negative effect on the proper implementation of the recommendations adopted during the Second Session. This view was expressed during the Third Session by the delegates who requested FAO to prepare a new fisheries development project document, as an alternative to the proposed "Unit". FAO were asked to consider basic needs and conduct consultations with UNDP regarding funding before finalising the project document .

41. Again, when the Fourth Session met in April 1982, the agenda concentrated on the issues that were of concern to the Member States at the time, namely, the management of the shrimp fisheries and other resources, and the FAO fisheries development project proposal for the Gulfs. The proposed project had a budget of US\$9.7 million for five years. However, the Member States faced the difficulty of providing national counterparts required for achieving the objectives of the project. They requested, therefore, reformulation of the proposal to moderate the activities, and to create greater flexibility to accommodate a gradual extension of activities to meet the changing needs in the region. In addition, FAO was requested to explore the

possibility of enlisting the cooperation of some capable national institutions and, possibly, sub-contract some of the activities. FAO, after reformulation, attempted to obtain clearance for funding from UNDP before final adoption by Member States. This was not successful.

42. An item proposing the establishment of a “Fish Marketing Information and Technical Advisory Service for the Gulfs Countries” (INFOSAMAK) was presented by FAO for consideration by the Committee. While the Members agreed to the importance of the proposal, the timing of it was considered inappropriate; the Members preferred to postpone it to when there was an improvement in the conditions for fish-trading in the region. Nevertheless, FAO agreed to initiate an economic feasibility study for the proposal, to be reviewed at the following session, which would include other Arab countries beside the Gulfs States. INFOSAMAK was eventually established in April 1986 in Bahrain with thirteen Arab Member States, five of them from the Gulfs.

43. At the Fifth Session, held in Manama, Bahrain, in October 1984, the agenda contained an information item dealing with the recommendations of the “FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development”, held in Rome from 27 June to 6 July 1984. The Gulfs Committee made no specific decisions on these recommendations other than to agree to discuss them whenever relevant matters arose.

44. The development of small-scale fisheries was discussed at length. It was agreed that there was a great need for technical and material support at various levels. Furthermore, the importance of fishery statistics, to be used in attaining rational planning of an integrated development of fisheries, was identified. The governments were urged to collect and analyse statistical data and FAO offered to provide technical support and consultancy services to set up a centre for the collection and analysis of statistical data. The Member States were requested to provide basic fishery data on forms provided at the Session.

45. The status of aquaculture in the member countries was reviewed. It was not possible to formulate a programme of action in this area since there was insufficient information available on the extent to which aquaculture had been developed. The FAO requested member countries to provide more basic information before a new assessment of the situation was made. A symposium on aquaculture was also suggested.

46. The Fifth Session also discussed a draft project proposal to provide technical support for the development and management of the fisheries of the Gulfs. The proposal was seen as a very important development after the termination of the Gulfs Project in 1979. The Committee emphasised the need for cooperation between the Gulfs States to obtain optimum utilization of their fisheries, and the importance of experts to advise on the rational development of this sector. The proposal was referred to higher authorities in the Member States for a decision. The FAO was requested to prepare a final project document.

47. Due to the first Gulf war (1980-1988), which was between two Committee Members, it was not possible to hold the Sixth Session in any of the Member States. The FAO Headquarters in Rome was identified as a suitable venue. In this Session

(October 1986), the items on the agenda were expanded to include trends in tuna fisheries, fishery data collection and analysis, economic and social factors, development planning, project proposals and technical assistance for small-scale fisheries development. These emerging new items on the agenda of the Gulfs Committee indicated the greater awareness of fisheries among the member countries and their increasing interest in fisheries development. Some items, such as that on the tuna resources, were of direct concern only to two of the Members, namely Oman and Iran. However, other Members thought it was useful to follow the deliberations on these resources.

48. The importance of coordinating the collection and processing of fisheries data by member countries was particularly stressed at this Session. Joint action was proposed by Bahrain, which then took the initiative to coordinate the joint action. This eventually led to the establishment of national fisheries data centres (NFDC) and a "Regional Database" (RDB). The integration of the data collected by NFDC into a RDB involved not only the collection of such data, but also its conversion into a common format, the initial data processing, and the provision of physical facilities to ensure the availability and dissemination of the region's data. A computer-based system for this purpose was described and demonstrated, and its structural, coordination and its operational needs were elaborated at the Session.

49. It was agreed that Bahrain, with INFOSAMAK assistance in the initial phases, would continue to coordinate the joint action on collection and analysis of biological and fisheries statistical data. National correspondents were appointed as focal points and the species, which would be studied, were also selected. A computerised bio-economic model of the artisanal and industrial shrimp fisheries was also suggested. FAO, INFOSAMAK and Bahrain were asked to report to the next Session on the feasibility of such a computer-based regional database, with headquarters in Bahrain, using data from the national fisheries data centres.

50. The agenda item dealing with the economic and social aspects of shrimp resource management was introduced as a reflection on the decline of the catch rates and the concomitant reduction in fleet profitability. These developments had forced some companies to close down their fishing operations. However, fishing effort in the Gulfs shrimp fisheries was still high and increasing, in spite of the introduction of closed seasons and the enactment of licensing provisions. The States of the region, therefore, were faced with the need to determine the desirable levels of fishing effort. There was a need for sufficient awareness of the economic losses, which were being incurred as a result of excessive fishing capacities. It was agreed that a workshop on fisheries development planning should be organized in conjunction with the next session. Furthermore, the workshop was to serve as a forum for the regional exchange of information on planning and approaches, and for reviewing present difficulties and shortcomings in planning procedures.

51. In its presentation, however, FAO underlined the progress made since 1975 by the countries of the region in building the capacity of their national staffs. It was noted that national specialists had become more available in most of the fields related to the fishery industry. It was also pointed out that the regional projects executed by the FAO for the Gulfs area during the nineteen seventies did provide the countries of the region with knowledge of stock evaluation, with advice on fisheries management issues, and with training opportunities.



52. Reference was made to the recommendations from the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sessions, which called upon the FAO to formulate a project document for technical assistance. The FAO informed the meeting that the proposals were circulated to the Members for comment. The proposals were found acceptable and covered most of the fisheries development and management needs of the member countries. The UNDP was to be called upon to provide preparatory funding and Member States were being asked to make effective contributions to the project's budget. Delegates concerned with costs requested time to consult with their respective governments regarding final approval of the project proposal.

53. Under other matters on the agenda of the Sixth Session, Iran requested to change the title of the Committee to the "Committee for the Development and Management of the Fishery Resources in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman". After a lengthy discussion, the Committee was informed that the precise title of the Committee, as decided by the IOFC, had to be used. Any change in the Committee's title could, therefore, only be decided upon by the IOFC. This same issue was also raised in subsequent Sessions, taking considerable time in the discussions, but no change in the title was possible without referring it to the IOFC.

54. In 1992 there was an atmosphere of war (after two Gulf Wars, 1980-1988 and 1990/1991) in the area; the Committee convened its Seventh Session after a lapse of six years since the Sixth Session in 1986. In spite of the unfavourable atmosphere, all Members of the Committee attended the Seventh Session, held in Tehran in Nov-Dec 1992, a rare event in the life of the Committee. A new spirit of cooperation was evident and great hopes were expressed for future progress in the activities of the Committee.

55. Besides the progress reports on the status of fisheries resources, which were expanded to include various fisheries of concern, the agenda included two major items for discussion: the first was the "International Study on Fisheries Research" and the second, a "Proposal for the Enlargement of the Area of Competence of the Committee".

56. The progress reports on the state of the fisheries indicated that the Member States had achieved substantial improvements in various fields of fisheries development. There had been progress in the collection of reliable statistical data, and in processing and analysis systems, in the implementation of management measures, the building of shore facilities and fishing ports, the upgrading of fishing techniques, the planning of fisheries development and the strengthening of fishery research capabilities. However, most of these activities were carried out at a national level.

57. On the regional level, it was indicated that cooperation was required in stock assessment, in the protection of the marine environment and in the standardization of statistical systems. In this context, it was pointed out that, since the Committee had not met since 1986, it had become urgent to consider a joint effort by the coastal countries in the region to resume the sustainable development and management of fisheries resources in the Gulfs area. Because of the absence of regional activity, FAO had found it difficult to obtain current information when preparing the document for this Session.

58. Fish marketing in the area was discussed, as local landings did not meet domestic demand in most of the Member States. The problems of marketing small-scale fisheries production, which contributed over 90% to local landings, were discussed in particular. Considerable improvements were required in marketing conditions to reduce imports and expand exports. To this end, the Committee urged member countries to join INFOSAMAK, which at the time was being transformed from an FAO project to an independent body. It was expected that, by joining the new body, the Member States would benefit from its services by improving their fish trading capabilities. In addition, they would benefit from commercially valuable information, promotion of fishery products, and technical support in pursuing investment and development opportunities. INFOSAMAK was designed to enable the fishery industry of the Arab States to develop their potential in coordination with the FAO's world-wide Fish Marketing Information Network.

59. The agenda item, "International Fisheries Research Study", was intended to advise the Committee on this Study and to identify any relevance to the Gulfs region. After deliberation, the Committee accepted Iran's invitation to attend an Ad Hoc Expert Consultation on enhancing cooperative fisheries research in the region. Member countries drew up a list of subject areas for the Ad Hoc Consultation for consideration. The Expert Consultation was held in Bushehr, Iran in October 1993.

60. At the request of some countries in the region, a Proposal for the Enlargement of the Area of Competence of the Committee, was included on the agenda. The extension was to include countries bordering the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea. It was noted that the existing Terms of Reference would be slightly amended and the name of the Committee would read: "Committee for the Development and Management of the Fishery Resources in the Northwest Indian Ocean". After consideration, the Members noted that there was a need for strengthening cooperation among the present Member States before enlarging the area of competence. Since a new positive will for collaboration had begun to materialize, it was agreed to postpone a decision on the enlargement.

61. Under Other Matters, several relevant subjects of concern were raised, namely: marine pollution; the prospect of establishing a regional cooperative research centre; the proposed Expert Consultation, which it was agreed would be held in 1993, and that documentation for Sessions should be prepared and distributed in a timely manner. It was also agreed that future Sessions should be held every two years.

62. With the decision to hold the Sessions every two years, a standing item was introduced on the agenda of the Eighth Session. This was the follow-up on the recommendations of previous Sessions and review intersessional activities. It became a very important agenda item. Reporting on the implementation of recommendations and informing the Committee of any developments of concern to its future work, were much appreciated. The reporting included the results of the activities of Working Groups established by the Committee. The discussions on the results of these Groups enriched the work of the Committee and prepared the ground for further work. In the Eighth Session, the result of a questionnaire on research priorities was also reviewed.

63. The centralization and standardization of fisheries data collection and analysis was a major item during the Eighth Session. This matter received considerable attention due to the need to examine resources on a stock by stock basis. For this

reason it was important to bring to the attention of the Committee the need to standardize statistical methods and take advantage of new software applications. This was useful for management, for lowering costs, and for collecting data on fishing operations.

64. As a regular practice, FAO takes the opportunity to bring to the attention of its statutory bodies information on international issues that are of direct relevance to such bodies. During the Eighth Session, the Committee was informed on the follow-up to the “United Nations Conference for Environment and Development” (UNCED), which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. Its importance stemmed from UNCED’s recommendation to hold the UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, an issue of relevance for at least some of the Committee Members, particularly those concerned with the management of highly migratory tuna stocks. Furthermore, environmental issues have become of major concern to all the Members.

65. The Committee was informed at the same Session that INFOSAMAK was being transformed into an autonomous, sustainable body. After a lengthy discussion and various clarifications, the Committee recommended that governments, and regional and national organizations and fisheries bodies, from both the private and public sector, that were not yet members, should join and support INFOSAMAK.

66. Of major concern to the Committee was the future of IOFC. The Committee’s parent Commission was facing structural changes or perhaps abolition. The implications of these developments for the Gulfs Committee, as a subsidiary body of the IOFC, were discussed, including the initial proposal to establish a “North-West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission” (to replace the Gulfs Committee), as an Article XIV body under the FAO Constitution. The real management powers such a body would have were pointed out, as were the financial implications of the restructuring. While recognizing the advantages of an enlarged management area, and the opportunities this would afford, in collaboration with countries such as Pakistan and India, to jointly assess shared stocks, the Committee nevertheless expressed its satisfaction with its present form and wished for its integrity to be assured under any new arrangement for IOFC.

67. Under Other Matters, the widespread development of aquaculture research in the region was brought to the attention of the Committee. As a result of the discussion of this matter, it was agreed that an Ad Hoc Aquaculture Working Group, within the framework of the Gulfs Committee, be established and plans to hold a meeting of the Group were made.

68. The deliberations at the Ninth Session (Sharjah 1997) commenced with reporting on the activities of several Working Groups, which held meetings between Sessions. There were reports from the Working Groups on Fishery Statistics, Pelagics, Shrimp and Other Invertebrates, and Demersal Fish. Furthermore, the Group on Aquaculture was established. In addition, the status of marine resources was brought to the attention of the Committee.

69. In the final regular Session of the Gulfs Committee in its normal form, the status of fish trade in the Gulfs following the establishment of the WTO was brought to the Committee’s attention. The Committee was told that the Gulfs States taken

together, were net exporters of fishery products, that trade between countries could be expanded, and that regional food security could be strengthened. It was noted that there were also significant differences between them. The “Implications of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations” were highlighted, especially for the countries that were not yet members of the WTO. There was a request for a more detailed study of the trade in fish and fish products as the existing foreign trade statistics, including those on fishery products, were inadequate for proper analysis. The Committee expressed the need to promote fish exports from the region. The need to know the quality assurance requirements of importing countries, and the ability to satisfy them, were stressed. The services of INFOSAMAK in this area were emphasized.

70. Coordination and collaboration between the Gulfs Committee and other regional bodies dealing with fisheries matter were discussed. These were: ROPME, GCC and INFOSAMAK.

71. To ensure coordination, it was proposed that the Working Group on Demersal Fisheries should have a joint meeting with ROPME. With regard to a proposed GCC Shrimp survey, and the Gulfs Committee’s proposed demersal trawl survey, it was agreed to get the support of the GCC to secure funding for either one or both surveys. As for INFOSAMAK, the Committee once again called upon its Members to support the Centre and non-members were invited to join and cooperate with it.

72. Three Ad Hoc Sessions were held to discuss the future of the Gulfs Committee and the formation of its successor. The First one was held in Cairo from 1 to 2 December 1997, in which the future of the Committee was discussed. The Second was held in Tehran from 3 to 5 May 1998 to discuss a Draft Agreement and the options available for the replacement of the Gulfs Committee. The third Session was held on the basis that, since the abolition of the IOFC, there was no legal basis for the Gulfs Committee to hold its Tenth Session. Therefore, as FAO was concerned to keep the momentum of activities going, it proposed that the third Ad Hoc Session for the Committee, held in Cairo from 3 to 6 April 2000 to finalize the establishment of RECOFI, should also discuss technical matters that were of concern at the time. This was agreed.

73. The agenda of the Third Ad Hoc Session included reporting on the steps taken to finalize the establishment of RECOFI, reporting on various issues of interest to the Committee, and reporting on the outcome of the Working Group on Aquaculture and on a regional Workshop on Fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance in the northwest Indian Ocean.

74. The Meeting was informed of the results of the feasibility assessment of the IFAD/FAO “Project for the Marine Environmental Surveys of the Red Sea, North-west Arabian Sea and the Gulfs”. Considerable interest and support were shown in the possibility of a regional marine resources and oceanographic survey to be carried out in collaboration with IFAD.

75. The participants were advised that, at the end of January 2000, the Government of Morocco and INFOSAMAK had signed a Headquarters Agreement to host the Centre in Morocco. Once again, Arab countries that were not yet members of INFOSAMAK were urged to join so as to gain the benefits which the Centre provides

in fish marketing information, technical advice, and information on regional and international fish trade issues.

76. Another issue of importance on the agenda of the Third Ad Hoc Session was that of governance for regional fisheries bodies. The Meeting was made aware of recent developments in international cooperation and management, and in particular the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Compliance Agreement and the UN Fish Stocks Agreement. All these underlined the need for all regional bodies such as RECOFI, to be strengthened appropriately to deal with new additional responsibilities in fisheries management.

77. At the Meeting, as in all regular Sessions, national reports were presented by country delegates. Each national report presented an outline of fisheries in the country, and highlighted the major issues. The opportunity was given to Representatives of Observer Organizations attending to present a report on their activities and future plans. Reports given were from Representatives of the GCC, ICLARM, Arab Federation of Fish Producers (AFFP), and Arab Organization for Agriculture Development (AOAD).

## **IX. ROLE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF WORKING GROUPS AND TECHNICAL CONSULTATIONS**

78. During the life of the Gulfs Committee (1972-2000), two distinctive phases of activities stood out. The first phase was the period during which the Gulfs Project took centre stage in the work of the Committee. As a matter of fact, the idea behind the establishment of the Committee, as a subsidiary of the IOFC, was mainly the servicing of this Project. The Gulfs Project, in its turn, established a Coordinating Sub-Committee that would act as the Steering Group for the Project. Its functions were to plan and review progress, conduct consultations and report to the Committee at each Session on its activities in the intersessional period. Its members were those states that were members of both the Gulfs Project and Gulfs Committee. The Gulfs Project ended in December 1979. The period between 1981 to 1992 was a tense period characterized by a lull in the activities mainly due to the two Gulf wars

79. The second distinctive phase in the activities of the Gulfs Committee was between the beginning of the Seventh Session, held in Tehran, 30 November to 4 December 1992, until its replacement by RECOFI in 2000. This period covered the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Sessions the three consecutive ad hoc Sessions, and the Technical Consultations on the future of the Committee.

80. The activities of the second phase, in addition to dealing with the normal issues placed on the agendas of the Sessions, may be described as the phase of Working Groups, and Technical and Expert Consultations. The idea of establishing Working Groups emerged during the Seventh Session when it became apparent that the Members had achieved on a national basis a certain level of progress in various fields of fisheries development. This included the establishment of more reliable statistical data collection, and improved processing and analysis systems, the implementation of managerial measures, the building of shore facilities and fishing ports, the upgrading of fishing techniques, the planning of fisheries development and the strengthening of fishery research capabilities.

81. At the regional level, however, cooperation was required in the assessment of shared stocks and their management, in marine environmental protection, and in the standardization of statistical systems. Regional networks that could provide technical support to the Committee, and thus strengthen its role in fisheries management and development, could have enhanced cooperation in the region. It should be noted that there was a limited attempt to have regional joint activities in 1984 for the collection of biological data on specific species and a task force in fishery statistics. Otherwise not much was achieved at as regional level.

82. In all, during the lifetime of the Committee, six specialized Ad Hoc Working Groups were established. They held seven meetings, supplemented by two Expert Consultations and one Technical Consultation, i.e. a total of ten technical meetings (Appendix E). These specialized activities opened up various opportunities for experts and scientists from the region and, at times, from outside the region, to increase the level of cooperation in fisheries research on a regional basis. The attendance at these meetings proved very encouraging and increased from one meeting to the next. (See Appendix E). Furthermore, a considerable number of technical reports and documents were issued and distributed at each session and meeting. A List of Major Reports is in Appendix F.

83. At the Seventh Session of the Gulfs Committee, held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, from 30 November to 4 December 1992, it was recognized that, at the regional level, cooperation was required in the standardization of statistical systems. Such cooperation could be enhanced through a regional working group that would provide technical support to the Committee, and thus strengthen its role in fisheries management and development in the region.

84. At the same Session, an Ad Hoc Group was established by the Committee and entrusted with the identification of subject areas for collaboration in fisheries research among member countries. The Group proposed several subject areas: Fisheries Statistics; Management of Large Pelagic Resources; Management of Small Pelagic Resources; Demersal Fisheries Management; Research on Mesopelagic Resources and Shrimp Fisheries Management. As a follow-up, the Ad Hoc Group proposed that the above cooperative research activities be implemented at the initiative of each of the member countries and/or at the initiative of the FAO Secretariat of the Committee. (An Aquaculture Working Group was added later as an area for regional cooperation).

85. At the Eighth Session held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, 17-21 December 1994, the Secretariat reported that three Working Group meeting were held. These were: a meeting on Fishery Statistics (22-24 October 1994 Manama, Bahrain); a Scientific Workshop on Mesopelagic Resources (29-31 October 1994, Muscat, Sultanate Of Oman) and a meeting on Shrimp Management (6-8 November 1994, Dammam, Saudi Arabia).

86. The results from these initial Working Groups indicated that there had been an increase of information to support fishery management. This had encouraged the call for the establishment of additional working groups for demersal fisheries, pelagic fisheries, conservation of marine mammals and marine reserves (which included environmental protection), and aquaculture. It was agreed that participation in the work of these Groups would be open to all scientists who are competent in any particular subject, not only those of the Gulfs, but also of other neighbouring

countries. It was recommended that the Working Groups should be concerned not only with biological analysis, but also with analysis of economic and social issues associated with the different fisheries.

87. The Working Group meeting on Shrimp and Other Invertebrates, held in Kuwait from 11 to 13 May 1996, raised the issue of the possible effects on the marine ecology of water diversions from the headwaters of Shatt Al Arab. The Committee concurred with this concern regarding degradation of the littoral environment and its effects on marine fisheries resources, particularly shrimp.

88. The “Report of the Expert Consultation on Myctophids Fishery Management”, produced at a meeting held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman from 29 to 31 October 1994, was reviewed with regard to stock assessment as well as oceanographic factors affecting production. As a result of this review, several recommendations and follow-up activities were proposed, including that the abundance of the stock should be regularly monitored through the use of acoustic surveys. It was also recommended that information on catch rates and abundance estimates should be gathered in a single document. In addition, it was suggested that countries developing commercial fisheries based on Myctophids prepare comprehensive fishery management plans that consider the need for conservation and avoid over-fishing, and the creation of an ecological imbalance.

89. The “Report on Research Priorities Identification”, which was issued as a result of an Expert Consultation for Management and Conservation of Fisheries, held in Bushehr, Islamic Republic of Iran (11 to 13 October 1993), was also discussed at the Eighth Session. The first priority that emerged was the need for more research on demersal resources, followed by shrimp resources, statistics and policy identification, and management planning.

90. In this regard, the Committee appreciated the significance of the 1977 to 79 trawl survey in the region that was conducted during the FAO implemented Gulfs Project. It regretted, however, that there had not been a similar region-wide survey since then although some countries had carried out surveys in their own EEZs. However, the lack of a more up to date survey prompted the Committee to point out the advantages of collaborative surveys and that trawl surveys were only one component. On this basis, the Committee requested that the Secretariat prepare a proposal for a Gulfs’ trawl survey to be executed through the FAO in cooperation with Member States.

91. The Working Group on Statistics presented its “Report on Fishery Statistics”, prepared as a result of its meeting which was held in Manama, Bahrain from 22-24 October 1994. The method of data collection throughout the Gulfs, and topics which included indices of fishing effort, log books, data codes, and regional cooperation were discussed.

92. After discussing the status of aquaculture in the region, which was developing rapidly, an agreement was reached to form an Ad Hoc Aquaculture Working Group within the framework of the Gulfs Committee. It was believed that this Group would be of great benefit to the region and help countries pursuing this field overcome the problems they were encountering.

93. During the Ninth Session, held in Sharjah, U.A.E. from 6 to 9 April 1997, most of the reporting on the intersessional activities concentrated on the expanding work of the Working Groups, which had increased in number to six: that is, five on marine fisheries management, and one on aquaculture.

94. The Working Group on Fishery Statistics held a second meeting in Bandar Abbas from 26 to 27 April 1995. Several problems of concern were raised dealing with the effects of aggregating and disaggregating data, giving rise to spurious trends in landing of particular species or species groups. The deficiencies in existing data collection practices, particularly at the working or technical level, were also acknowledged. These needed to be effectively overcome by increasing funding for more staff. The quality of data from different countries varied; a higher and more uniform standard was needed for management purposes. Sampling procedures were also reviewed in an effort to improve on the quality

95. The report of the Working Group on Pelagics, which was held in Bandar Abbas, Iran from 26 to 27 April 1995, noted issues of concern, particularly the decline of some species, and the continuing exploitation of immature individuals. This called for more regional cooperation in ageing studies, especially of *Scomberomorus* species. A further meeting was recommended soon. With the Large Pelagics, it was recommended that there should be cooperation and coordination, including the exchange of data, with the newly formed IOTC.

96. Two Working Group meetings, on Shrimp and Other Invertebrates, and on Demersals, were held simultaneously in Kuwait from 11 to 13 May 1996. Here also concern was expressed on the absence of recent data on the incidence and composition of shrimp bycatch. It was pointed out that bycatch reduction devices could result in improved quality of catch, increased survival of bycatch and little, if any, loss of shrimp catch.

97. For demersals, it was agreed that field programmes were required to map spawning grounds and determine spawning periods of fish stocks for protection purposes. As for the marine environment, closer collaboration with regional Oceanographers was needed and called for.

98. The Working Group on Aquaculture held its first meeting in Cairo, Egypt from 1 to 3 October 1996. During the meeting each participant presented a national report on sea ranching and stock management. The meeting discussed a proposal for the establishment of an "Aquaculture Information System" for the region. In addition, various priorities for work were recommended. Other topics discussed included marketing of economic species, training, investment-oriented feasibility studies, seed production, coastal management, feed production from local materials and integrated farming systems, which stressed the efficient use of water. The importance of an exchange of information and the careful expansion of aquaculture was emphasized. There was also a recommendation to transform the Working Group into a standing group and to meet regularly on a biannual basis.

99. At the third Ad Hoc Session held in Cairo, Egypt from 3 to 6 April 2000, a report was reviewed on the second meeting of the Working Group on Aquaculture, held in Kuwait from 18 to 21 May 1998. The report focused on the efforts exerted since the first meeting to establish an "Aquaculture Information System" along the



same lines as one established by the General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean (GFCM). The meeting was informed that six Members of the GCC, who were also Members of the Gulfs Committee, had indicated their wish that the System be hosted by KISR in Kuwait. This wish was to be conveyed to the Secretariat of RECOFI.

100. An overall analysis of the functioning of the Working Groups shows that initially the need for further training in field enumeration became apparent. There was a limited ability to comprehend database theory and methodology, which proved to be a major constraint on efficiency, effectiveness and the timeliness of fisheries data collection. There were very broad disparities between member countries on statistics collected. Some were more advanced than others. This situation caused another constraint in regional cooperation due to the lack of coherence and homogeneity in reporting to senior management, which had repercussions for the exchange of information among Members. Without proper reporting due to poor data, it was difficult, at times, to understand the nature of problems in fisheries management.

101. Furthermore, there was a major weakness in the resource management process, in the provision of advice on the state of the resources, and a lack of long-term management advice. Senior management, as decision-makers, were at times confused about the various concepts applied in fisheries management. There were misunderstandings, which were potentially dangerous, both conceptually and regarding practical assistance in developing fisheries management plans among newly emerging countries in this field.

102. The Working Groups, in spite of their shortcomings, provided a forum for experts and scientists, including junior researchers, and an opportunity to prepare and present reports of work in progress that otherwise would not have been possible. These junior staff provided the core of the newly emerging management teams and fisheries administrators in the Member States. They also tended to be those establishing national fisheries institutions, research centres and fisheries science sections in national universities.

103. Working Groups meetings developed as a useful venue for regional workers to meet each other and become aware of the various researchers' interests and activities. Participants often expressed great appreciation for the opportunities to communicate among themselves, which the meetings afforded. These meetings also provided opportunities for discussions between countries on shared resources, such as between Oman and Iran on the mesopelagic resources in the Gulf of Oman, and between countries in the north of the Gulf, on shad and pomfret management research issues.

104. These meetings increased the momentum of activities as they went on. The member countries were very supportive of the Groups' activities. For example, the Working Groups on resource assessment agreed on the urgent need for regional surveys. This was a major achievement and indicated real progress. This was the first time that there was explicit concentration on the conservation recommendations that had been addressed by the regional Groups. Some countries came to meetings with well-prepared analysis of their fisheries. Others realized the areas of weaknesses in their reporting during the Groups' discussions and deliberations. Furthermore, several countries now have statistical and other information systems that are functioning well.

105. All the Working Groups had the opportunity to hold only one or two meetings by the time that the Committee was abolished. Therefore, most of these Groups did not have much time to mature and be of full service. While they proved very useful in initiating various fisheries activities, there was much still to be achieved in order to respond to the specific needs of the Members of the Committee. However, they would have been even more effective had they developed into officially acknowledged marine science and aquaculture entities for the Gulfs. Their activities could have been more formalized, for example through the introduction of rules of procedure, statutes, regular meetings, and elected officers, rather than meeting only on an ad hoc basis.

106. Generally speaking, the initiation of Working Groups at the Seventh Session in Nov./Dec. 1992 in many ways had enhanced the work of the Gulfs Committee. Before those Groups were established, there was a serious lack of knowledge and information about various aspects of fisheries management and aquaculture. The results of the Gulfs Project were the only tangible information readily available on a regional basis. The fisheries of the area and its problems were very much in need of establishing specialized groups to understand the problems and find solutions for them. The Working Groups provided such a mechanism.

107. By the time the Eighth Session was held (Dec. 1994), the amount of information that was generated since the commencement of the Working Groups had substantially improved as an outcome of the satisfactory results of the three Ad Hoc Working Group meetings held between the two Sessions. Recognizing these improvements, the Committee called for additional Working Groups, subject to the availability of logistical and financial resources. The work of these Groups provided the opportunity to many individual scientists from the region and other neighbouring countries to become involved in the work of one or more of these Groups. Also, a call was made to extend the periods of each meeting and to hold them on an annual basis, rather than on an ad hoc basis.

108. Two years later, at the Ninth Session held in April 1997, the reports on the Working Groups meetings increased to five at this one Session, thus increasing even more the knowledge and information on the management of the fisheries and aquaculture made available at the Session.

## **X. LINKAGES WITH OTHER REGIONAL FISHERIES BODIES**

109. The Gulfs Committee, being the main fisheries body that deals with the marine fisheries of its Member States, had areas in common with other bodies in the Gulfs region. This necessitated coordination with three such bodies dealing with fisheries matters. These were:

1. The Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME)
2. The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulfs (GCC), and
3. The Centre for Marketing Information and Advisory Services for Fishery Products in the Arab Region (INFOSAMAK).

110. ROPME had the same membership as the Gulfs Committee and covers the same marine area (Iraq was later excluded). Its main concern is the protection of the

marine habitat from pollution, particularly oil pollution. Contacts between these bodies began in 1994. Reports and invitations to meetings were exchanged. Joint cooperation was reviewed and the areas of collaboration were highlighted. A future work plan was envisaged and the specific concerns of each body to achieve the desired results, especially with work on endangered or overfished species of common concern such as grouper and pomfret, were taken into consideration.

111. Both fisheries bodies agreed that the objectives of ROPME and the activities of the Gulfs Committee Working Group on Demersal Fisheries and the Marine Habitat complemented each other well, and that their mutual objectives should be pursued cooperatively. To formalize contacts between both bodies, the FAO/RNE Secretariat of the Gulfs Committee signed an Agreement of Cooperation with ROPME and both institutions allocated some funds for joint activities.

112. The GCC membership consists of only six of the eight Members of the Gulfs Committee. (Iran and Iraq are not members). Its Secretariat has its own Fisheries Committee which meets regularly or on request to co-ordinate fisheries activities among its six Members. The main cooperative activity between the Gulfs Committee and the Secretariat of the GCC arose from the plans of both bodies to carry out a shrimp fisheries survey, and a demersal trawl survey in the Gulfs.

113. It should be noted that, ever since the Fourth Session (Doha, 19-21 April 1982), the FAO had been promoting a "Fisheries Development Project Proposal" which would have covered these surveys. At the same Session, Kuwait also presented a "Project Proposal for the Study of Shrimp Fisheries". Both these proposals were designed as a follow-up to the Gulfs Project, which terminated in 1979. During subsequent Sessions, the proposals were repeatedly discussed whenever the state of the various fisheries was reviewed. No concrete plans resulted nor decisions taken on future activities regarding the surveys. Funding the surveys was the main obstacle that prevented implementation of the projects, in spite of modifications that were introduced to the original proposal.

114. Efforts were later exerted to seek funding from outside donors. The GCC Secretariat contacted IFAD to participate in the funding. According to IFAD rules, the member countries of the GCC do not qualify to receive IFAD assistance. However, IFAD suggested expanding the area of the proposed surveys to include adjacent waters that are bordered by countries of the region that would qualify. Under the circumstances, IFAD and the FAO Fisheries Department, proposed a Technical Assistance Programme for "Marine Resources and Environmental Surveys in the Red Sea, Northwest Arabian Sea and the Gulfs". IFAD agreed to fund a Preparatory Phase to be implemented by the FAO. This was carried out during 2000 at a cost of US\$68,000. The main outcome of the Preparatory Phase was the preparation of a programme proposal to implement follow-up marine fisheries resources survey programmes. Up to the end of 2001, no decision had yet been taken as to the implementation of the shrimp and/or the demersal resources surveys. IFAD is expected to follow up the matter with the FAO and the countries concerned.

115. In the meantime some Gulfs Committee Member States are proceeding with their own national programmes of surveys, particularly of the shrimp resources. (Kuwait reported that a shrimp survey was carried out jointly by Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. See Section VII). The proposed joint finfish resource survey has not materialized. The intended regional cooperation among the member countries has

not been encouraged, particularly in that, since 1979, no comprehensive Gulfs-wide survey programme has been undertaken.

116. Ever since the Fourth Session (April, 1982), INFOSAMAK has been on the agendas of all succeeding Sessions. The linkage between the Gulfs Committee and INFOSAMAK began when the FAO proposed a project to provide fish marketing information, promotion and technical advisory services to the countries of the Gulfs and to make possible the exchange of such information among fish producers and consumers in the member countries. The Committee expressed appreciation for the proposed move; however, it requested a postponement of such a service since it was thought that the area was not ready for it. In the meantime, the FAO informed the Committee that it would initiate a preliminary feasibility study for the project. This would include other Arab countries and would identify financial resources for the project to be reviewed at the following Session.

117. At the Fifth Session, (October, 1984), the Committee was informed by the FAO that a one year preparatory phase of the INFOSAMAK Project had been approved for funding by the UNDP, to be followed up with a long-term project. The Committee welcomed this move and Bahrain was agreed upon as the headquarters for the Project.

118. Thirteen Arab States signed to become members of INFOSAMAK, five of whom were Members of the Committee. All other Arab countries were urged to join. INFOSAMAK, which formed the Arab link to the FAO Global Fish Marketing Information Network, provided its members with fish marketing information, promotion, and promoted fish trade within the Arab region and with other regions. It conducted various training courses for fisheries personnel, issued several specialized publications, and held several buyer-seller meetings to help the Arab countries in developing their fish trade. Funding from UNDP lasted up to 1991, supplemented by contributions from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), which helped run the Project for two more years, and later by IFAD and the Common Fund for Commodities. The Member States had no financial obligation towards the Project up to end of the nineteen nineties.

119. However, during the late 1990s, INFOSAMAK was put on hold and ceased to be an FAO Project due to a lack of funding. Its members agreed to transform it into an independent, autonomous Centre and were requested to provide financial contributions towards its running costs. However, as an independent body with no outside donors, its membership dropped to eight Arab countries, with only one country from the Gulfs participating. Faced with financial problems that prevented it from carrying out its responsibilities, its General Assembly of the Centre decided to relocate its headquarters to Morocco. It was thought that Morocco, as the major fish producer and trader among the Arab countries, would offer INFOSAMAK a better opportunity to expand its activities and generate enough income to service the Arab countries. The Agreement to relocate the Headquarters from Bahrain to Casablanca was signed between INFOSAMAK and the Moroccan Government at end January 2000, with only eight Arab Member States participating.

120. In order to benefit fully from its services, the Arab member countries of the Gulfs Committee were always urged to join and support INFOSAMAK, which gained from being a link to the FAO established Global Fish Marketing Information

Network. Some member governments of the Gulfs Committee, while appreciating its services, declined to join and contribute to its running costs. These were of the opinion that, since all the Gulfs countries had free market economies, INFOSAMAK was only of service to those companies from the private sector. While this view is very well understood, the Government agencies and institutions dealing with the fisheries sector would also benefit tremendously by using the information and other services provided to decision makers in their fisheries administration and management activities. Finally, regional organizations attended some of the Sessions as observers. (See Appendix G and Table III).

## **XI. INFLUENCE OF GLOBAL FISHERIES ISSUES ON THE GULFS COMMITTEE**

121. At various regular Sessions of the Gulfs Committee, the FAO Secretariat introduced items on the agendas about issues that were global in nature and were of international concern. This was an attempt by FAO to make the Committee aware of international developments in such matters. Some of these issues were brought up on an informative basis and others were presented for discussion, expecting the direct involvement of the Committee.

122. The first such item was the 1984 FAO “World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development”. This item was on the agenda of the Fifth Session (Bahrain, October 1984). While the Committee was made aware of the resolutions and recommendations, no specific programme or activities based on these recommendations emerged. It was agreed, however, to discuss the recommendations whenever relevant matters arose.

123. Similarly, at the Sixth Session (Tehran, November/December 1992), the Committee was informed of the discussions on responsible fishing practices and responsible fisheries management, which had been discussed at the “International Conference on Responsible Fishing”. The Conference was organized by the Government of Mexico in consultation with FAO, in Cancun (May 1992), during which FAO was requested to elaborate an international code of conduct for responsible fishing.

124. At the same Session, a summary of the findings and recommendations of the “International Fisheries Research Study” was introduced and discussed for possible follow-up activities relevant to the Gulfs’ region. A fruitful discussion followed which led the Committee to agree unanimously with the need to foster regional cooperation in fisheries research and which encouraged the idea of convening ad hoc working groups at regional and sub-regional levels to address specific research areas. It was agreed that the work of such groups could lead to the formation of one or several regional networks among scientists. A research institution that has a comparative advantages in research on a certain subject area, could be assigned as a lead centre. The establishment of a regional fisheries centre, at a later date, could be considered.

125. At the Eighth Session (Muscat, December 1994), the Committee was invited to discuss follow-up to Agenda 21, the major document of the United Nations Conference for Environment and Development (1992). In the light of the information

on the progress made, the Committee discussed marine environmental matters and their importance with reference to fisheries. Some of the countries of the region were already deeply involved in marine environmental issues and in the prevention of oil and heavy metal pollution in particular. The Committee also encouraged the signing of an Agreement of Cooperation between FAO/RNE and ROPME to carry out joint activities.

126. The Session was also informed about several issues dealt with by UNCED, especially regarding further sessions of the UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. This issue was of particular importance because of the implications it may have for the future management of the highly migratory tuna stock that is of importance to Iran and Oman. Information was also provided on the finalization of the “Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries” and the “Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas”.

127. At the Ninth Session (Sharjah, April, 1997), information was given about the contents of the Marrakech Agreement establishing the WTO, signed on 15 April 1994. Various agreements relevant to fisheries and several sources of pertinent information were also indicated. The Session was also informed that the WTO was the principal forum to discuss and decide on trade rules and on general aspects of trade.

128. At the same Session, the Committee reviewed the results and recommendations of the World Food Summit (WFS), which was held in Rome in November 1996. The Committee discussed the various issues that were specific to the role and contribution of fish and fishery products to the food security of the Committee’s Member States. It strongly encouraged the States to give serious consideration to the recommendations of the WFS.

129. It could be concluded from the above that the global fisheries issues that were brought to the attention of the Committee by the Secretariat, were of concern to the Members. However, these issues were not accorded sufficient priority to lead to major regional activity by the Member States. Nevertheless, some measures were taken on a national level, but only through the overall policy of the Governments as Members of FAO rather than as a direct result of the work of the Committee.

130. All the Global issues that were brought to the attention of the Committee were already deliberated on by other international and FAO fora, such as at the United Nations Conferences, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), and its Sub-Committee on Fish Trade. Participating governments had already taken what actions they deemed necessary. Other delegates from different agencies, ministries or institutions that were not dealing with fisheries matters, possibly attended some of these meetings. Nevertheless, bringing these global issues to Sessions of the Gulfs Committee was valuable to those delegates who attend its Sessions, otherwise they may have never become aware of them.

## **XII. ACHIEVEMENTS, SHORTCOMINGS AND CONSTRAINTS**

131. Throughout the twenty-eight years of its existence, the Gulfs Committee faced circumstances which in one way or the other directly and indirectly affected its activities and hindered the extent to which it was able to fulfil its objectives. Nevertheless, the Committee, despite some shortcomings, made several tangible and intangible gains.

132. The following is a brief summary of the achievements, shortcomings and constraints experienced by the Gulfs Committee from which lessons could be learned that would enable RECOFI to provide an improved service to its Members in the development and management of their resources.

### **1. Achievements:**

- Since the activities of the Gulfs Committee commenced in 1975, the Member States came to realize the great need that exists for cooperation and collaboration at a regional level and the need for technical and material support at various levels for the small-scale fisheries sector.
- By the time of the Sixth Session in 1986, the items on the agendas and the level of discussions indicated a greater awareness of the issues among the participants and an increasing interest in the development of fisheries. There was good recognition of mutual problems that should be identified and resolved regionally.
- Through the work of the Committee, bilateral cooperation was facilitated between two and sometimes more Members to deal with shared fisheries resources that were specific to and only available in their waters.
- With time, new emphasis emerged on the need for coordination in the collection and processing of fisheries data. A proposal for joint action to eventually establish a regional database was initiated. More than one Member State offered to host it.
- Real progress has been made since 1975 by Member States in building a cadre of national staff for their fisheries institutions. It should be noted that national specialists, especially in fisheries sciences, have become available in fields related to the fishery industry.
- In spite of the repercussions and implications of the two Gulf Wars, and the consequent difficulties which prevented Sessions taking place for Six years (1986-1992), it was possible to hold the Seventh Session in 1992 in Iran. Full attendance at this Session demonstrated the desire, eagerness and willingness of the Members to work jointly for the development and management of their fisheries. A new positive will for cooperation emerged which helped to reactivate the Committee.
- By the time the Eighth Session was held in Oman, 1994, the national progress reports presented at Sessions, or in Working Groups meetings, demonstrated that the Member States had achieved substantial progress in various fields of fisheries development. This included more reliable statistical data collection, improved processing and analysis systems, the implementation of management measures, the building of on-shore

facilities and fishing ports, aquaculture research, species restocking, upgrading fishing techniques, the planning of fisheries development and the strengthening of fishing research capabilities. In each country, a fisheries research institute and/or a department or a section dealing with fisheries sciences had emerged in the national universities in the region.

- The establishment, after 1992, of six specialized Ad Hoc Working Groups has been a major achievement. These groups formed the technical arm of the Committee and enriched the deliberations and discussions at meetings of Sessions and Working Groups. Their results helped the Committee embrace new activities and plans.
- Working Groups' activities opened up various opportunities for fisheries experts and scientists from the region to increase the level of research on a regional basis. The interaction with visiting scientists was also most useful.
- The Working Groups provided a forum for experts and scientists, including junior researchers, and provided them with an opportunity to prepare and present reports of work in progress that otherwise would not have been possible.
- Fisheries Officials in Member States wisely took advantage of the presence of visiting FAO Officers on Committee duties, to request them to provide specific technical advice and facilitate specific studies on a national basis.
- The researchers and junior staff, some of whom participated in the activities of the Committee, provided the core of the newly emerging management teams and fisheries administrators. They also formed teams to staff the national fisheries institutions, research centres, and fishery science departments in national universities, and also positions in the private fisheries sector.
- The establishment of collaborative activities with the other regional fisheries bodies has been most useful.
- Bringing to the attention of the Committee current international fisheries matters has been very much appreciated. Some of the matters raised were of direct concern to some Members.
- Regional fisheries bodies attending Committee Sessions as observers had the opportunity to make presentations of their activities and future plans in an effort to pin-point areas for coordination and joint actions where appropriate.
- Each Member State, when hosting a session or a meeting, made excellent arrangements for the event. Hospitality and other logistical arrangements, were generously extended, creating an atmosphere of cordiality that prevailed throughout the meetings.



## 2. Shortcomings:

- The establishment of a “Technical Support Unit”, following the termination of the Gulfs Project in 1979, was regarded as important. Despite the recognition of this need early in the life of the Committee, no concrete action was taken towards establishing the “Unit”. The FAO continued preparing and elaborating project documents, and introduced modifications on several occasions, but no decision was ever taken to establish the Unit. The main reason was the lack of funding from the UNDP or other outside donors.
- The failure to establish an institutional arrangement to follow-up on decisions created a vacuum in the capacity to implement the recommendations which had a negative effect on proposed regional activities. National activities, however, continued. This shortcoming led to the failure to carry out region-wide fisheries resources surveys after 1979. It is hoped that the present efforts to conduct much needed surveys, in cooperation with FAO and IFAD, will come to fruition in the near future.
- Members failed to fully endorse joining the INFOSAMAK Centre, in spite the fact that the Centre was originally designed for the Gulfs Region in 1982. INFOSAMAK, during its years of operation, proved its usefulness and the need for its existence. It is hoped that in its new location as an independent body, the Governments of Member States, public organizations and the private fishing industry, will join it and support it and thus gain from its services.
- The proposal made in 1986 to establish the much-desired Regional Database (RDB) was not implemented, in spite the fact that Bahrain was selected to host it, national focal points were identified, and the species to be studied were selected. It is hoped that the proposal made in the year 2000, nominating Kuwait to host the Aquaculture Information System at KISR, will have a better chance. (It should be noted that with the advancements in electronic communications, data can easily now be transmitted and exchanged. However, a regional centre for data coordination and analysis would still be required).
- While there was a heavy emphasis on training fisheries scientists by most Member States, the humanities, particularly the fields of fishery economics, other social sciences, and marketing were by and large neglected.
- Most of the progress made in fisheries in the region was made on a national basis. This situation prevented the urgently needed joint stock assessments, marine environmental protection, and the standardization of statistical systems on a region-wide basis from being carried out.
- The plans to hold joint activities with ROPME on the marine habitat, especially on endangered species, did not materialize during the life of the Committee, in spite of the joint cooperation

agreement signed between the two bodies. It is hoped that such activities would take place in the near future under RECOFI.

- The Working Group meetings took place on an ad hoc basis. To become more effective, these Groups should have been formalized by becoming standing groups charged with carrying out tasks referred to them by the Committee, and they should have met on regular basis.
- The Members should have participated in the preparation of the proposed agendas for the Sessions. This opportunity was offered in the past but was not taken up.

### **3. Constraints:**

- Delegates attending meetings varied in status and competence. This fact has affected the level of the discussions and the recommendation taken. Delegates often changed from one Session to the next, and might arrive without knowledge of the proceedings of previous Sessions, which made proper follow-up difficult. Very few delegates had authority to commit a Member State to a desired action, even in routine matters. Minor issues were on several occasions referred to higher authorities, thus delaying decisions until at least the next Session. Decisions of some countries on naming delegates to Sessions and other meetings were not known until the eve of the event, thus preventing the delegate from be well prepared.
- The role of the FAO, and its responsibilities towards regional fisheries bodies in general, and to the Gulfs Committee in particular, was only vaguely understood by several of the officials in some Member States. Some believed that their countries' contribution to the overall budget of FAO covered funding of all activities and projects emanating from the recommendations of the Gulfs Committee. This belief created misunderstandings at meetings during discussions on the funding of activities.
- In some Member States, the national staff had limited funds allocated for research work, equipment and logistical support. Most of them had a static position with unclear chances for career development. Salaries were not increasing on a gradual basis, with little hope for other incentives.
- Due to the two Gulf Wars (1980-1992), there was a lull in the activities of the Committee. It could not hold a meeting in the region in 1986, and was not able to hold any meetings or activities for a period of six years. (1986-1992).
- The reluctance of the member countries to commit funds to finance a regional institutional arrangement as a follow-up to the Gulfs Project, and thereby to implement its recommendations, was a

major constraint to achieving an early advancement in the development and management of fishery resources.

- Activities of the Gulfs Committee were funded by FAO. Member States provided hosting facilities only and paid travel and accommodation for their delegations to attend meetings. The extent of the activities, therefore, depended on the availability of funds for the periodic meetings in the FAO Programme and Budget, rather than on the needs of the region.
- The conflict over the issue of the title of the Committee consumed several precious hours of discussion during some Sessions. This matter, however, has now somewhat been resolved by the decision to use a neutral title for the succeeding Commission, RECOFI.
- The Second Gulf War (1990/91), although short lived, had serious and long-lasting effects on regional cooperation, and curtailed national activities in most of the member countries. It also put a halt to the marine fisheries development of at least one Member State.
- The status of aquaculture was not sufficiently known in most member countries to have a proper assessment of its status. More national data was required.
- In the earlier stage of fisheries development, there was a need for further training of field enumerators. There was a limited ability to comprehend database theory and methodology, which proved to be a major constraint on efficiency, effectiveness and the timeliness of statistics collected by member countries. Some were more advanced than others.
- Difficulties over funding the trawl resources survey were the main obstacle to achieving regional cooperation in development and management of the resources. Since the Gulfs Project terminated in 1979, the member countries consistently sought outside assistance for such activities.
- The exchange of correspondence between the Secretariat and the Member States was cumbersome. Responses to messages, wherever sent, were usually slow, in spite of repeated reminders at times. This resulted in delayed follow-up to activities on certain issues.
- Member countries sometimes did not receive documentation for the Sessions with sufficient time to allow proper preparation for the discussions.
- Entry visas for delegates who needed them were sometimes not issued in time, which resulted in some delegates not being able to attend meetings.

### **XIII. ROLE OF RECOFI AFTER GULFS COMMITTEE**

133. The transformation of the IOFC: Gulfs Committee into a Commission under Article XIV of FAO Constitution, gives RECOFI a stronger mandate, its own core budget, increased powers, a more effective structure to work with, and greater flexibility. It has increased and enhanced its real management powers, as an FAO Regional Fishery Body. Its decisions and operations on the management of fisheries resources will be subject to the agreement of its Members and not any other body. However, these increased powers will have budgetary implications by which the expenses of the new body will have to be met by Member States. In the case of RECOFI, which will operate under Article XIV of FAO Constitution, the FAO will provide the Secretariat, while the annual core budget will be the responsibility of the Members. However, under these conditions, RECOFI will be a semi-independent body.

134. With these new management powers, and considering the new developments concerning high seas fisheries, RECOFI will have to play a more active role in the conservation and management of the resources in its marine area. It should have a proper mandate and a firm commitment by its Members in order to function effectively. The effectiveness of this Commission will depend very much on the political will of its Members and degree of support the governments extend to it.

135. Excluding the constitutional and financial implications associated with giving RECOFI a comprehensive and clear mandate for the conservation and management of its fisheries resources, there will be considerations that will have to be taken into account in its future role, which the Gulfs Committee did not have. These considerations may be summarized as follows:

- i) RECOFI will be responsible for its activities and accountable to its Members. FAO will play an advisory role to help it reach maturity and full independence.
- ii) RECOFI should maintain impartiality as long as it remains within the framework of FAO. The non-political nature of FAO regional fishery bodies has been instrumental in providing a platform for dialogue and cooperation among their Members.
- iii) Financial contributions to RECOFI's core budget should be paid regularly when due in order for it to be properly financed and able to provide support to its Members, perform its functions, and achieve the objectives set. RECOFI should be able to hold its regular sessions as agreed and carry out its intersessional activities unhindered.
- iv) RECOFI should be always aware of the international fisheries issues that are being tackled by the international bodies concerned. It should also make contacts with international organizations in this regard to establish a dialogue as appropriate.

136. The working methods and practical operating arrangements discussed at RECOFI's First Session held in Muscat from 6 to 8 October 2001 seems to be a

successful first step towards its future role as a recognized replacement of the Gulfs Committee. At the Session a schedule of annual sessions was agreed (during May of each year) up to the year 2010. Members also agreed on several practical issues to support and strengthen RECOFI's technical and scientific activities by initially establishing two Working Groups, one on Aquaculture and the other on Stock Assessment and Fishery Statistics. These two Groups existed under the Gulfs Committee. Several other agreements, mainly relating to financial commitments and full cooperation between the Members, were also reached which, if implemented in a timely manner will prove that the Members have taken a wise step in transforming the Gulfs Committee into a Commission.

#### **XIV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **1. Conclusions:**

137. The important role of regional fishery bodies in the management of marine fisheries resources has been long recognized. They are the most appropriate means available through which more effective conservation and management of shared fishery resources can be achieved. FAO regional fishery bodies have also played a constructive and effective role in high seas fisheries.

138. The IOFC: Gulfs Committee, since its establishment by FAO in 1972, had been instrumental in the management of the fishery resources in its area of competence. The Committee, at its initial stages, faced various logistical and technical problems. These were gradually alleviated, to an extent by the implementation of the UNDP/FAO Gulfs Project. When the Project was terminated in 1979, it left behind a considerable amount of data on the fisheries of the area. Unfortunately, the political atmosphere between 1980-1988, and 1990/1991, had repercussions on the work of the Committee and limited its scope to proceed with the management of the fisheries of the area. The Committee had to meet once outside the region (in 1986) and was not able to meet for a period of six years between 1986 and 1992.

139. The Committee's fortunes changed for the better after 1992, when a new cooperative spirit appeared among Members who showed a willingness to work earnestly together to achieve the set objectives. The meetings were regularized on a biannual basis, the Members' commitment to work together was strengthened, specific working groups to tackle technical matters on a regional basis were established, and a new cadre of fishery scientists and research workers emerged.

140. With this new spirit, it can be concluded that the Committee was quite successful in establishing a sound base for developing effective fisheries management. It could also be said that the Committee achieved several of its objectives. This can be attributed to the commitment of the Members, in spite of negative outside influences, and to the role played by FAO in supporting and assisting the Committee by funding activities and providing guidance, technical expertise, and managerial and administrative advice. It could also be concluded that the Gulfs Committee was more successful on the national level than on the regional level.

141. However, the Gulfs Committee would have achieved better results and been more effective had the Member States established the "Technical Support Unit" to

follow up on the implementation of the recommendations of the Gulfs Project, as was proposed by the FAO on more than one occasion. A serious technical gap occurred, which continued to widen with the passing years. This resulted in no action being taken in a number of important areas. Monitoring, control and surveillance of the resources on a regional basis was neglected. There was a great need for proper fishery resources surveys, which did not happen. Information on fishing effort, to provide better analysis of the state of the stocks, was never collected. This was particularly important as some of the major commercial species showed serious signs of overfishing and there were dwindling economic returns to the fishermen. Most species may have become fully exploited with a possibility that those showing declining catches were overexploited. Conservation and management, based on the precautionary principle, may be required to avert a drastic fall in catches, or the collapse of certain fisheries, as has occurred in some other areas.

142. While Member States attached significant importance to their fisheries resources and were sufficiently committed to the future of fisheries in their area, actions taken were mostly focused on the development of the national fisheries sector. In response to the technical programmes and reports initiated by the FAO's Technical Services for regional implementation, Member States would select what activities suited each of them nationally and had them included in their national programmes. Together with the failure to commit any funds for regional programmes, this may have contributed to deferring agreement on joint action to implement the regional resources surveys. There is a regional need and a required management necessary to maintain sustainable fisheries resources. This national focus may also explain why there was no implementation of the proposal for the regional database or a regional fisheries research centre. Each Member State established its own research institution or facility. At least some of the funds spent could have been more productively pooled to establish a multipurpose regional institution to service all Member States.

143. It should be noted that the Member States have a clear and unequivocal responsibility for ensuring the sustainability of their fisheries resources. They are responsible for implementing agreed management measures, for their active participation and for financial support. While the strengthening of FAO regional fisheries bodies has become a necessity, the FAO cannot be expected to do this without clear direction from the members of these bodies and technical and financial support from the members.

## **2. Recommendations:**

144. The steps already agreed during the Commissions' First Session to launch the activities of RECOFI, seems to be steps in the right direction. There were agreements to a schedule of regular annual meetings up to 2010, the establishment of two ad hoc Working Groups and the identification of issues to be dealt with. There was agreement to develop and strengthen partnership agreements with other relevant regional organizations, and a common agreement on the various issues that have to be tackled jointly or on a national basis. There was also agreement on the need to use media channels to communicate RECOFI's activities to the general public and to officials, as a means of spreading awareness in fisheries circles and to promote support for its objectives. In addition, the financial arrangements were reaffirmed and all the Member States confirmed their commitment to contribute to the core budget.

145. However, it would be most useful if the conclusions reached in this Post-Evaluation Study and the lessons learned from the experiences gained during the operational period of the Gulfs Committee are spelled out in a set of recommendations for the new Commission to take into consideration. These recommendations are meant to contribute to strengthening RECOFI and making this regional fisheries organization more effective. The suggested recommendations, without being accorded any particular priority, are as follows:

- It is most important that the FAO Secretariat of RECOFI, before embarking on any future meetings and related activities, should ensure that Member States are fully committed to their membership of the Commission and to making their financial contribution to the core budget. Some states still insist on becoming Members without any financial commitment. Furthermore, the Secretariat should make it absolutely clear to the Member States that the core budget agreed upon is for funding the regular meetings, etc. Any additional demands for activities will have to be financed by additional allocations from the Members themselves or from other sources.
- Each member state should officially designate a main Representative and an Alternate to attend regular and ad hoc sessions and meetings, to deal with the intersessional activities of RECOFI, and to act as the focal point in his country. He should be authorized to decide on routine matters, and should be responsible for the timely exchange of correspondence, and for keeping his superiors informed of progress made.
- The establishment of ad hoc working groups to deal with specific technical matters has proved very successful in making these groups the recognized technical arm of the parent Commission. But it is now time to improve the mechanisms of their operation. It is recommended that the groups should gradually be transformed into regular standing working groups that meet on an agreed regular basis. The number of working groups should be expanded to include as many issues as necessary, including fisheries economics, marketing, fishing gear, quality control, and extension and social services. The parent Commission should present the working groups with the problems that it would like to have studied. The chairman of each working group should formally report to the Commission when it meets. The technical staff appointed to the working groups should be technically competent in the subject matter being studied and should be available to attend subsequent meetings to ensure continuity. Scientists and experts from the region or outside it, as well as from the private sector should be encouraged to participate as and when appropriate. The FAO Secretariat and the Fisheries Department's Technical Services, as well as FAO's Legal Office, should be regularly called upon and consulted for guidance and advice. The working groups may be expanded in the future to include subjects such as the status of rare and endangered species, fisheries habitats, and environmental monitoring.
- The fisheries resources surveys are urgently needed. Current landings are reported to be at a decreasing rate, fishing capacities are increasing dangerously, several fish stocks are showing signs of heavy exploitation, there are weak enforcement policies, effective management measures are lacking, and fishing effort is not monitored or controlled. All these indicators should prompt Member States to take a decision to implement

the proposal for the regional trawl surveys and the associated scientific activities, which should be undertaken in cooperation with FAO, IFAD and the GCC.

- Since funding seems to be blocking any progress on this issue, it is recommended that RECOFI should follow up with IFAD and other funding agencies, such as the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science, as suggested in the Report of RECOFI's First Session. The UNDP and the World Bank could be approached to obtain funding, possibly through the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Other potential donors could also be approached. However, if all attempts to find a donor in the foreseeable future fail, it would be imperative for the Member States to allocate the necessary funding from their own resources. The amounts involved are not expected to be astronomical and not beyond the means of Members. Most of the scientists, experts, equipment and the provision of logistics would be from the region rather than from international organizations, as was the case with the Gulfs Project.
- In considering the proposed fishery resources surveys, it is recommended that improvements be made to the way status and trends in fisheries information is assembled and disseminated. The data should adhere to the principles of transparency, quality, credibility, and comprehensiveness. Fishery policy makers and fishery managers will have to be responsive to public opinion, which is shaped by information on the status and trends of fishery resources.
- The enlargement of the area of competence of RECOFI may be considered in a new context. This matter was postponed during the time of the Gulfs Committee. The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden so far are without an institutional fisheries arrangement. RECOFI may consider at least an enlargement to include the waters in the Red Sea under the jurisdiction of Saudi Arabia, already a RECOFI member, and Yemen, which has waters along the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Expansion could also go eastwards towards Pakistan and India, in the waters of the Arabian Sea where there are shared fish stocks that needs to be jointly managed. At the outset, observer status could be exchanged in each other's fisheries bodies.
- It is essential that RECOFI Sessions continue to be conducted in two of the FAO official languages, Arabic and English. All documents for the meetings, including this Post-Evaluation Study, should be in both languages. It is not necessary, however, that Working Groups and their proceedings use both languages. Using both languages would improve the understanding of issues under discussion, and enable fisheries staff not attending meetings, and whose knowledge of the English language is limited, to follow the work of RECOFI. This will also serve to allow decision-makers to absorb the issues better. At the same time it would be wise for Iran to translate essential documents into the Persian language for similar reasons.
- As it was agreed in the First Session to develop and strengthen partnership arrangements with other relevant regional organizations, it is recommended that RECOFI sign a Partnership Agreement with INFOSAMAK Centre. Besides encouraging the non-member states of the Centre to join, it would be beneficial to exchange observers and to have appropriate joint activities.



Fish and fishery product trade issues, under the new international arrangements created by the establishment of the WTO, make it essential for RECOFI to use the services of INFOSAMAK in its fish trade.

- Since one of the major requirements for a successful regional organization calls for full participation by all its Members in the whole marine area under its competence, it is necessary that Iraq's participation in the activities be re-activated. If and when Iraq deposits the instrument of acceptance of RECOFI with the FAO Director-General, Iraq should again become an active member, fully engaged with the work of RECOFI. Its cooperation would be necessary in the conservation and management of the shared stocks in its waters and also in averting any environmental problems from activities carried out in the Shatt Al Arab estuary. Furthermore, Iraq's expertise would prove useful in the activities of the Working Group on Aquaculture. The Secretariat should pursue this matter in due course.
- While the Fisheries Committee of the GCC provides a very good coordinating role between its six Members, who are also Members of RECOFI, this should in no way provide an opportunity for any misunderstanding in opinions or decisions taken by either organization as to their effects on the other. Conflicting views or decisions should be the subject of amicable solutions and eventual agreements.
- The establishment of the Regional Database has long been overdue. Bahrain has already offered to host it. It is time now to agree to take up this offer. Since a number of specialized centres dealing with different fisheries disciplines are now envisaged, it is recommended that these centres be distributed among the Member States in accordance with any comparative advantage a Member State may have in the expertise required for each centre.
- In order for the campaign to use the media channels to promote awareness of the regional activities carried out by RECOFI to be successful, it is recommended that a periodical, the RECOFI BULLETIN, is issued, perhaps quarterly, and distributed in all fisheries circles within the region and to relevant organizations in other regions. A competent editor should be appointed and publication and distribution of the periodical should be coordinated by the Secretariat. This may be done in conjunction with the Regional Fisheries Database when it is established. The Bulletin could publish current information on fisheries issues, data, and news of RECOFI on the national and regional levels. The core budget may help to defray part of the cost, but consideration of a separate financial allocation is encouraged. The language or languages of the Bulletin would need to be agreed upon. The Commission should also consider the establishment of an Internet web site to provide up-to-date information on RECOFI.
- RECOFI, being an FAO Regional Fisheries Body, should follow up on the latest developments on fisheries internationally. From time to time new instruments are established or agreements are reached which would in due course affect the fisheries of all areas of the world. The latest such instruments and agreements which RECOFI should be aware of and consider, are the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, The United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by

Fishing Vessels on the High Seas, Agenda 21 adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the recently adopted FAO International Plans of Action.

- The Commission may also form an “Emergency TASK FORCE” to work with the Governments and relevant organizations in the region when emergencies occur as a result of accidents causing oil spills, which pollute the marine environment and fish habitats. Such accidents have occurred several times in UAE and other adjacent waters. It could also provide assistance in studying fish mass mortality, which occurred in Kuwaiti waters in August 2001. RECOFI may also become an advisory body to national, regional and international entities interested in the fisheries situation in the area of its competence, and should attempt to attend the meetings of related regional and international fisheries bodies as an observer.
- Last but not least, Governments of the Member States are called upon to upgrade the priority they give in their national development plans to fisheries development and conservation issues. This could be done by increased allocations for training in various areas of fisheries, encouraging more research activity, and increasing academic training in the marine sciences and in the humanities in fields related to fisheries. Governments could also help create incentives for employment in fisheries, provide better career opportunities, and increase awareness by the public at large of the importance of the fisheries sector for food security, employment, and as an important source for good nutrition.