

# COFI 35 – WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE PROCEDURE

## RECEIVED COMMENTS FROM OBSERVERS

### A – BASIC INFORMATION

<b>Document Number</b>	COFI/2022/9
<b>Document Title</b>	Developments in global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture
<b>Commenting Observer</b>	Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN)
<b>Referred paragraph numbers</b> (if applicable)	-

### B – COMMENT RECEIVED

Mr Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

The Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network, also known as RSN<sup>1</sup>, was established in 1999 as an FAO-led initiative, and now brings together the secretariats of 54 regional fishery bodies (RFBs) and partner organizations, including 11 FAO RFBs. Since its inception, RSN meets regularly in the margins of COFI meetings, with the support of FAO. FAO also provides the Network with a part-time Secretariat which allows it to maintain joint contacts and activities during the intersessional period.

Twenty years after its establishment I am pleased to report that RSN has evolved not only in terms of membership and participation but, in particular, as a special technical forum to facilitate and promote the exchanges of views, information, and experiences between the different secretariats concerning the issues of common concern. The RSN does not make binding decisions on its members, nor does it receive financial support from its members.

At present the network is gradually becoming a coordination mechanism for the undertaking important activities: firstly, research and publication of technical information related to RFBs and secondly, giving more visibility to the work of RFBs within the international community.

I would like to mention a few examples of RSN outputs. For instance, the RSN Magazine<sup>2</sup> started as a short newsletter and is now a detailed publication of contributions from the secretariats, academics, UN agencies, and research centers. The RSN secretariat has recently fostered technical publications related to RFBs providing an overview of the work of the world's regional fisheries management organizations and advisory bodies<sup>3</sup>, and a cooperative assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on fisheries and aquaculture – A global assessment from the perspective of regional fishery bodies<sup>45</sup>.

FAO and the RSN secretariat have also created and regularly updates in a fully comprehensive manner 54 RFBs fact sheets<sup>6</sup>. These fact sheets are published on a dedicated FAO web page as a heavily cited and reliable source of information on each RFB among academics, IGOs, NGOs, and other stakeholders.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/rsn>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/rsn/magazine>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/publication/262004?lang=en>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/publication/268452?lang=en>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/publication/281600?lang=en>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/organization/search>

Last Friday and Saturday 2 and 3 of September, prior to COFI-35, 43 members of the Network participated in the 9th meeting of the RSN<sup>7</sup>. This represents 75% percent of the current regional fisheries management organizations and advisory bodies of the world. Crucial topics on the international agenda on fishery and aquaculture governance at both the global and regional scale were discussed. These included the impact of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture sustainability, area-based management tools including OECM, safety at sea and decent working conditions, the relevance of the RFB performance review practices, and a revised Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure for the RSN. The report of the meeting will be prepared and disseminated by the RSN Secretariat via the FAO website.

All of this occurs with limited financial resources from FAO, which remains as the chief concern and constraint to the further development of the Network. In this regard, I wish to gratefully acknowledge the support provided by the European Union and Japan, which allowed support for the establishment (through FAO and RSN) of regional coordination frameworks among RFBs in the Western Indian Ocean and Central Eastern Atlantic Ocean.

Mr Chair,

I would like to conclude by noting that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development emphasizes the importance of the regional and sub-regional dimensions, regional economic integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development. The regional level is the most appropriate level for establishing a collaborative framework that encompasses the whole ecosystems and their efficient preservation and protection, while providing opportunities for participating states to sustainably benefit from the services they render.

In this respect, I would like to highlight the uniqueness of RSN Network that provides an international forum with which to convey global policies to the regional and individual country level and help ensure their implementation at the regional level. This is of special importance at a time when an increased awareness through the international community should be increasingly aware of the essential role played by RFBs for the conservation and sustainable management of all living aquatic resources. Therefore, in order to continue to improve their performance, RFBs should be further strengthened through the global processes.

On behalf of all the inter-governmental organization members of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network, I wish to thank you, COFI, the COFI bureau and FAO for the positive consideration given to the RSN and reiterate my hope that the recognition of the value of this network as an important tool to reach the goals and commitments identified and adopted by COFI will allow for its consolidation and further development in the future.

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/meeting/41363>