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Organización  
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para la  
Alimentación y la  
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## REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI)

### Eighth Session

Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, 12-14 May 2015

### CURRENT STATUS OF RECOFI AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

#### Executive Summary

The commitment to strengthen the functioning of the Regional Commission for Fisheries, in order to oversee the implementation sound fisheries management in the region, has been expressed by all RECOFI member countries over the years. The programme of work agreed upon by the Commission biennially, has invariably been jeopardized by the lack of sufficient resources, often constraining RECOFI Members to undertake activities in a very limited number of priority areas. In addition to the timely deposit of annual contributions and the requirement for extra-budgetary funding for specific activities, the support of a reinforced Secretariat to oversee the functioning of the Commission is one of the key factors which should be taken onboard when developing a strategy for the future of RECOFI as the entity responsible for the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture in the region.

#### The Commission is invited to:

- consider the strengthening of the Secretariat through the establishment of professional and administrative posts funded through the RECOFI budget, and possibly located in the region hosted by one of RECOFI Member countries.
- revisit the scheme of Member contributions and to consider revising it in conformity with the long-term requirements of the Commission

## INTRODUCTION AND CURRENT STATUS

1. The commitment to strengthen the functioning of the Regional Commission for Fisheries, in order to oversee the implementation sound fisheries management in the region, has been expressed by all RECOFI member countries over the years. At its last session (Tehran, 14-16 May 2013), the Commission noted with appreciation the efforts and work of the Secretariat despite the financial challenges that have persisted and recognized that a need exists for Member countries to further support these efforts. RECOFI has, to date, highly depended on the support of FAO to provide the services of the Secretariat and technical backstopping in the fields of both fisheries and aquaculture development and management. In order to meet the demands of the expanded programme of work of RECOFI, the Commission, at its sixth session (Rome, 10-12 May 2011), had decided that the Members' annual contribution would be increased to USD15,000, on the condition that current and outstanding contributions would be settled as soon as possible. This increase has not taken effect, as yet, due to outstanding contributions due from a number of Members; on several occasions. Member countries have been urged to pay their contributions on time and to settle any arrears without delay.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK AND OPTIONS

2. The FAO Regional Conference for the Near East at the 32nd Session (24-28 February 2014) noted the role of RECOFI and made a number of recommendations, in particular the Conference:
  - i) acknowledged the role of RECOFI in effectively promoting cooperation among its Members for the development of fisheries and aquaculture, and requested FAO to continue ensuring its technical support to the Commission; and
  - ii) encouraged RECOFI members to ensure adequate funding to preserve the work of the Commission, as this was becoming increasingly essential for the sustainability of shared fishery and aquaculture resources in the Region;
3. In consideration of the above and in view of the importance attached by RECOFI Members to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, there seems to be a general agreement that the Commission needs to be further strengthened, whilst recognizing that FAO's support at the current level, in particular to sustain the RECOFI Secretariat, cannot be maintained in the long term. The Commission has also acknowledged the benefits of support from projects funded through extra-budgetary contributions which would supplement and add value to the core activities of RECOFI.
4. The programme of work agreed upon by the Commission biennially, has invariably been jeopardized by the lack of sufficient resources, often constraining RECOFI Members to undertake activities in a very limited number of priority areas. In this regard, the seventh session of the Commission highlighted, inter alia, importance of the timely deposit of annual contributions by Members as well as the requirement for extra budgetary funding for specific activities.
5. It is evident that in order to accomplish the challenging goals set by the Commission, sufficient financial and human resources need to be available in a sustainable manner. The support of a reinforced Secretariat to oversee the functioning of the Commission

is one of the key factors which should be taken onboard when developing a strategy for the future of RECOFI as the entity responsible for the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture in the region. While FAO would remain committed to providing technical support to RECOFI as an FAO RFMO, Members should consider the establishment of a Secretariat, through appropriate procedures and rules to be defined by the Commission, the services of which would be financed by the RECOFI autonomous budget. In addition, Members may wish to explore the possibility of establishing headquarters for the Commission, to be hosted in one of the Member States in accordance with an agreed selection process and conditions to be set by the Commission.

6. In the light of the above, the Commission is invited to revisit the RECOFI Member contributions scheme and to consider amending it in such a way so as to ensure that sufficient funds are available for effective functioning of RECOFI and the implementation of the programme of work agreed upon by the Commission. Three options to address this matter are presented below for the Commission's consideration:
  - i) Increase the annual Member contribution of \$15,000 to a fixed amount consistent with a long-term budget covering the running costs and priority activities of the Commission.
  - ii) Annual Member contributions will fluctuate and be determined at each RECOFI session depending on the budget adopted for the biennium. Each Member will contribute equally to the budget.
  - iii) Establish a scheme to determine the Members' scale of contributions towards the RECOFI budget adopted at each Session. The RECOFI budget will not be shared equally among the Members and contributions from each will be calculated according to the established scheme.
7. The third option has been adopted by most RFMOs whereby the scale of the Members' contribution is normally proportionate to the wealth of the country and the size of the fishing and aquaculture sectors. It offers the possibility for the organization to draw up a budget based on the agreed annual or multiannual workplan, towards which Members contribute in accordance with the established scheme for the calculation of contributions.

#### **ACTION BY THE COMMISSION**

8. The Commission is invited to consider the strengthening of the Secretariat through the establishment of professional and administrative posts funded through the RECOFI budget, and possibly located in the region hosted by one of RECOFI Member countries. It is also invited to revisit the scheme of Member contributions and to consider revising it in conformity with the long-term requirements of the Commission.