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REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI)

Eighth Session

Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, 12 - 14 May 2015

Seventh and eighth meeting of the Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM)

Executive Summary

This document provides a summary of the seventh and eighth meetings of the Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) and their outcomes for the information and consideration of the Commission.

The commission is invited to:

- Review the outcomes of these meetings, with particular regard to proposed activities highlighted.
- Confirm the relevance of the regional priorities identified by the WGFM including joint appraisal of shared fishery resources and regional management plans.
- Endorse the reviewed list of RECOFI priority species.
- Advise on how to improve the level of activity in the intersessional period of the WGFM, given the low level of activity in the past intersessional period.

INTRODUCTION

1. This document is a summary of the discussions and main outcomes of the seventh and eighth meetings of the Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) and its relevant implications for the future of the work of RECOFI. The full reports of these meetings are available as RECOFI/VIII/2015/Inf.5 and RECOFI/VII/2015/Inf.6.

SEVENTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

2. The seventh meeting of the RECOFI WGFM was held in Kuwait City, the State of Kuwait, from 5 to 7 November 2013. The meeting was attended by 19 delegates from four members of the Commission and three representatives from one observer organization. Four RECOFI members were absent (Iran, I.R. Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates).

Outcomes of the seventh session of RECOFI and implications for the WGFM

3. The work of the Permanent Fisheries Resources Committee of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) undertaken, in particular the ongoing work on the narrow-barred Spanish mackerel. The WGFM was informed that the Sultanate of Oman will host a database beginning in 2014, and that non-GCC RECOFI members would be invited to be part of the database, pending confirmation from the GCC.

4. The WGFM reviewed the list of priority species, and decided to add the silver pomfret (*Pampus argenteus*) and Indian shad (*Tenualosa ilisha*), two species important for Kuwait, Iraq and Iran (I.R.). The reviewed list of key species supporting main reference fisheries in the RECOFI area is in Appendix 1.

5. The WGFM addressed the matter that the budget was not sufficient to implement the intersessional workplan for the WGFM, and that this constrains the capacity to proceed with any actions beyond the planned workshop on the narrow-barred Spanish mackerel. The meeting agreed that member countries must address these budgetary issues in order to formulate and effective workplan for the WGFM. Additionally, the meeting was informed of the possibility to move the seat of the Secretariat to a RECOFI member country, which would enable full-time support of a Secretary, with support from FAO as needed, and would facilitate more direct participation of member countries.

Fishery socio-economics: design and implementation of a regional workplan

6. The meeting reviewed and commented on a draft questionnaire developed by the Task Group, which was then simplified and revised during the meeting. The meeting endorsed the revised version with some additional changes proposed and agreed that this questionnaire would be circulated to Task Group members and filled out, the results of which would be reported at the eighth meeting of the WGFM.

Update on the implementation of the RECOFI Recommendation on minimum data reporting

7. The meeting was informed that 2013 represented the second round of data submission, but that at the time of the meeting, four members had submitted data (Iran, I.R., Iraq, Oman, Qatar), while had yet to submit their data (Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE). Notable improvement was acknowledged in data submission and reporting by Iraq and Qatar. The meeting was reminded that sharing research data, as well as non-official information useful for regional management, is a common practice among Regional Fisheries Management Organizations.

8. The WGFM noted a substantial improvement in catch and effort data collection and monitoring capacity for major fisheries in most Member countries and that historical and updated information accumulated to date was reaching a sizeable amount. The WGFM noted the urgent need to establish an access policy and protocol to those data and information collected through the Recommendation and it was agreed to discuss this at the next WGFM meeting. Additionally, the

WGFM reviewed basic classifications and noted that different names are occasionally utilized for the same gear, which would require future clarification. The meeting agreed that at the next meeting of the WGFM, there should be a review of the development of a comprehensive definition of categories with regards to fleet segmentation. Additionally, the WGFM agreed that in the future, it would be preferable to establish a direct data exchange process between national authorities and the Secretariat, and stressed the critical importance of establishing a reinforced RECOFI Secretariat with dedicated and sufficient resources.

Preparatory work to the regional joint kingfish stock assessment workshop

9. The meeting affirmed that the joint assessment bringing together GCC work on the narrow-barred Spanish mackerel, (*Scomberomorus commerson*) and that of other RECOFI members, and also possibly including Pakistan and Yemen would be the first essential step toward establishing effective management for the stock of this species in the RECOFI region. The meeting approved the objectives of the workshop, the agenda, and the data and participant skill requirements.

Progress towards a regional fisheries management framework

10. The meeting acknowledged the requests for management advice made at the seventh session of RECOFI, in particular the need to formulate a regional management plan for the narrow-barred Spanish mackerel, the advice to further develop concrete management procedures with regards to shrimp trawling, and to formulating specific management advice in relation to fishing effort control, taking into account the particular nature of fisheries and management plans in different countries. The WGFM agreed that Kuwait would take the lead to formulate management options with regards to shrimp trawling, according to the research currently being undertaken, and would present these for management recommendations to be considered at the eighth meeting of the WGFM, and if appropriate submitted to the eighth plenary session of RECOFI in May 2015.

EIGHTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

11. The Eighth Meeting of the RECOFI WGFM was held at the Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa of the Food and Agriculture of the United Nations (FAO) in Cairo, Egypt, from 8 to 10 December 2014. The meeting was attended by three members of the Commission (Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia) and two observer organizations (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora [CITES], and North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, [NEAFC]). Iran (Islamic State of), Iraq and the United Arab Emirates apologized for their absence; Bahrain and Oman did not attend the meeting. It was noted that this was the lowest ever attendance at any RECOFI meeting.

Kuwait proposal for the management of trawl shrimp fisheries in the RECOFI area

12. A proposal for regional coordination of management of shrimp trawl fisheries in RECOFI was presented, based on a review submitted to the Permanent Committee of Fish Resources of the GCC and based on the outcome of the project: 'Shrimp stock assessment in the Western Arabian Gulf by countries of the GCC'. The meeting acknowledged the importance of harmonizing management measures at the regional level, and the need for the establishment of a regional shrimp database was agreed. The meeting noted and appreciated that Kuwait, through PAAF, would raise the need for a regional DNA study of shrimp stocks and requested that Kuwait check the availability of DNA mapping results with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR).

Regional joint assessment of the kingfish stock in the RECOFI area

13. The meeting reaffirmed that there was a need for the regional joint assessment of the kingfish stock in the RECOFI area, and emphasized the importance of holding this meeting in 2015.

Results of the socio-economic survey questionnaire

14. The background and results of the socio-economic survey were presented and discussed. The socio-economic challenges, many of which are unique and common to the RECOFI area, were presented, as well as examples of how socio-economic information can be compiled and presented at a regional level. The meeting agreed that this survey questionnaire, while general, marked a good start to ascertaining the available information and to establish the foundations for the socio-economic work of RECOFI, and in particular the information on price, trade and crew composition were useful. While socio-economic work was not prioritized in the work plan for 2015-2016, the meeting recognized that further information should be collected by the socio-economic Task Group. Details of socio-economic work are available in RECOFI/VIII/2015/7.

Update on the implementation of the RECOFI Recommendation on minimum data reporting

15. The meeting was informed that Iran (Islamic Republic of), Oman and Qatar had submitted the data required under the RECOFI Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1, entitled "Recommendation on minimum data reporting in the RECOFI area", in 2014 and that Iraq had provided limited information on its fleet and operational status. The remaining members have not yet submitted the required information at the point of meeting. In particular, it was noted that the two members, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, with proven capacity in data compilation and submission, had not submitted their updated data in two consecutive years. After the consultation, Saudi Arabia indicated its intention to submit the updated information covering both 2012 and 2013 activities at the earliest convenience. The meeting also noted that Kuwait had not yet provided any data despite its high capacity in data collection and compilation and urged Kuwait to make proper arrangement to ensure to fulfil its obligation of data reporting under the Recommendation.

16. The need for a regional database for marine fisheries data in the RECOFI area was raised and ideas discussed and re-raised the issue for the Commission to reconsider the possibility of expanding the Regional Aquaculture Information System to accommodate capture fisheries data. Detailed further information is available in RECOFI/VIII/2015/8.

State of IPOA-IUU and Port State Measures Agreement in the RECOFI area and preparation for the Arabian Sea international workshop

17. The meeting was informed of the status of implementation of the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and related instruments in the RECOFI area and in particular the impact of IUU fishing on the fisheries management process and as well was informed of the overview of the existing international legal instruments, guidelines and tools related to the management and control of fisheries. The meeting noted the benefits of implementing the IPOA-IUU, the 2009 FAO Port State Measures Agreement and the 2014 Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance in the fight against IUU fishing.

18. The meeting acknowledged the importance of addressing the issue of IUU fishing activities in the region and the possible landing of IUU-caught fish by non-coastal States in ports of RECOFI member countries. In this regard, it welcomed the convening of a capacity development workshop on port State measures, which would represent an important first step towards strengthening cooperation in the RECOFI region and beyond to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

CITES and RECOFI

19. The possible cooperation of RECOFI in CITES was discussed, and the meeting noted several suggestions for RECOFI to support the implementation of CITES for marine species. The meeting recognized that the individual member countries were responsible for effectively implementing these listings and managing shark fisheries, acknowledging that all member countries were contracting parties to CITES, and that Oman and Iran (Islamic Republic of), through their membership in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), had additional shark-specific measures to adhere to.

Workplan of the RECOFI WGFM for the period 2015-2016

20. The meeting was informed of the status of the activities approved at the seventh session of RECOFI, namely: (i) pilot joint assessment of the narrow-barred Spanish mackerel, and workshop on the utilization of fishery-dependent data; (ii) follow-up and monitoring of a regional fisheries management framework; and (iii) development of a regional programme to address IUU fishing on the basis of the outcome of the IUU FAO/RECOFI workshop held in Oman in 2009.

21. The meeting noted that none of the priority activities were addressed during the intersessional period and the member countries were called on to be more proactive to support and implement the Commission's decision and work. The meeting recognized that with only three member countries in attendance, it was not possible to conclusively agree on the programme of work for 2015–2016, but rather made proposals. While the priority activities were agreed, in the absence of both Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Oman, which had previously been proposed to host activities, it was determined that alternative locations should be proposed as alternates, to be further discussed at the upcoming Eighth Session of RECOFI. Further details of the WGFM Programme of work and budget are available in the document RECOFI/VIII/2015/11.

Other matters

22. The meeting had benefitted of the attendance of two members of NEAFC, who presented on NEAFC at this meeting, and in particular on its port state controls and vessel monitoring system (VMS) and control activities and experience. The meeting noted the progress made by NEAFC since its inception, in particular its relationship with relevant scientific institutes as well as its cooperation with other RFBs. The meeting recognized that, despite the different fisheries existing in the RECOFI and NEAFC regions, the common interest in sustainable fisheries management created an opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience on areas of common concern.

23. The meeting was informed on the status of the project entitled: Support to capacity development for fishery stock assessment and management in GCC countries and Yemen – Phase Two, in particular that the project could be extended beyond just GCC countries to include all RECOFI member countries in order to include the occurrence of many share stocks in the region.

APPENDIX 1

Reviewed list of species of common interest

| FAO name | ASFIS code | Common name | Scientific name |
|--------------------------------|------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Green Tiger Prawn | TIP | Green Tiger Prawn | <i>Penaeus semisulcatus</i> |
| Blue swimming crabs | SCD | Blue swimming crab | <i>Portunus pelagicus</i> |
| Pharaoh cuttlefish | IAH | Cuttlefish | <i>Sepia pharaonis</i> |
| Stolephorus anchovies | STO | Anchovies | <i>Stolephorus</i> spp. |
| Indian oil sardine | IOS | Indian oil sardine | <i>Sardinella longiceps</i> |
| Bludger | NGY | Jacks | <i>Carangoide gymnostethus</i> |
| Golden trevally | GLT | Golden trevally | <i>Gnathanodon speciosus</i> |
| Indian mackerel | RAG | Indian mackerel | <i>Rastrelliger Kanagurta</i> |
| Snubnose emperor | LBW | Orange finned emperor | <i>Lethrinus borbonicus</i> |
| Pink ear emperor | LTS | Redspot emperor | <i>Lethrinus lentjan</i> |
| Spangled emperor | LHN | Spangled emperor | <i>Lethrinus nebulosus</i> |
| Coral hind | CFI | Coral grouper/Bluespotted grouper | <i>Cephalopholis miniata</i> |
| Orange-spotted grouper | ENI | Orange-spotted grouper | <i>Epinephelus coioides</i> |
| White-spotted spinefoot | SCN | Rabbitfish | <i>Siganus canaliculatus</i> |
| Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel | COM | King mackerel/Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel | <i>Scomberomorus commerson</i> |
| Longtail tuna | LOT | Longtail tuna | <i>Thunnus tonggol</i> |
| Kawakawa | KAW | Kawakawa | <i>Euthynnus affinis</i> |
| Requiem sharks nei | RSK | Sharks | Carcharhinidae |
| Silver pomfret | SIP | Silver pomfret | <i>Pampus argenteus</i> |
| Hilsa shad | HIL | Indian shad | <i>Tenualosa ilisha</i> |