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# COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

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### REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE FAO FRAMEWORK

#### Executive Summary

This information paper provides an overview of developments and work performed, during the last two years, by regional fisheries bodies (RFBs) established under article VI and XIV of the FAO Constitution. Following aspects highlighted by Members during the Thirty-first Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2014, this paper includes an introduction on the subject, a presentation of the main differences among RFBs according to their constitutive instruments, and reported information on their related work, grouped according to their geographical area of competence.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. FAO Regional fishery bodies (hereinafter referred to as ‘RFBs’) are established under article VI or XIV of the FAO Constitution. Statutory bodies under article VI act as advisory bodies to their member States (hereinafter referred to as ‘members’ or ‘member States’) and, in general, depend on funding from the FAO; while those under article XIV are entitled to adopt regulatory and binding measures to their members and may have autonomous budgets. These bodies are called ‘Regional Fisheries Managements Organizations’ (hereinafter referred to as ‘RFMOs’), and their respective conventions or agreements provide obligations beyond those set out in the FAO Constitution and other Basic Texts. RFBs and RFMOs are a relevant regional or subregional mechanism through which states work together to ensure the long-term sustainability of shared fishery resources.

2. As noted at the Thirty-first Session of the Committee on Fisheries in 2014, this paper introduces them according to their mandate and their geographical area of competence. Their activities, challenges and developments here mentioned are as reported by the respective Secretaries of the RFMOs/RFBs.

3. This information paper does not aim to provide a thorough overview of the work of FAO RFBs and RFMOs, it is meant to report on main current processes and related challenges these bodies face in fulfilling their mandate. The development that some of them have experienced must be highlighted, including the impact they have had at country level in addressing critical issues, as well as the increasing role of these bodies in the international for a, as major mechanisms for improving fisheries and aquaculture governance in a coordinated approach. This recognition should be taken into account by the FAO and COFI in order to continue supporting those bodies according to their specific needs.

## II. FAO REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES, INCLUDING REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

4. The RFBs established under the provisions of Article VI and Article XIV of the FAO Constitution are currently a total of eleven.

### A. Regional Fishery Bodies under Article VI of the FAO Constitution

5. RFBs established under Article VI are entrusted with drawing-up recommendations and advice for FAO Governing Bodies and the individual members and, in general, they operate with funding from the FAO Regular Programme to support core activities. They are created by the Conference, the Council, or by the Director-General under the authority of the Conference or Council.

6. FAO resources to support Article VI bodies are dedicated to different operational matters, from secretariat and administrative, to technical areas, and including, in some cases, the delivery of work-plans and related programmes that such bodies have adopted. It also comprises and covers activities of their subsidiary bodies or working groups, although these activities are frequently supported through extra-budgetary contributions and partnerships with projects.

7. Statutory Bodies under Article VI include the Commission for Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Latin America and the Caribbean (COPESCAALC); the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Africa (CIFAA); the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC); the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF); the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC), and the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC).

## **B. Regional Fishery Bodies under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution**

8. RFBs under article XIV of the FAO have regulatory powers and the capacity to adopt binding conservation and management measures. They are referred to as Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs). Depending on their 'level of autonomy', some of them also receive funding through resources from outside the Regular Programme, in most cases from contributions made by their member States in accordance to the respective statute. As stated by the FAO Conference, "any agreement concluded under Article XIV of the Constitution among member States of the Organization should entail financial or other obligations going beyond those already assumed under the Constitution of the Organization. Failing this, there would be no grounds for such an agreement, at least not in the legal form prescribed under Article XIV of the Constitution".

9. Statutory bodies under Article XIV include the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC); the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish); the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM); the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC); and the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI). Taking into account the different nature of bodies under Article XIV, the question of the delegations of authority and a number of operational facilities to them has been under consideration in the recent past by various Governing Bodies of the Organization (i.e. the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters, the Programme Committee and the Finance Committee). Detailed reports have been presented on actions taken by the Organization concerning the delegations of authority to Article XIV bodies and the related implementation.

## **III. FAO RFBs and RFMOs working progress**

10. This section applies a grouping of FAO RFBs and RFMOs based on their geographical area of competence.

### **A. Inland waters**

#### **Africa**

##### Committee on Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Africa (CIFAA)

11. CIFAA was established by the FAO Council in 1971, under Article VI of the FAO Constitution. It represents a continent-wide inland fisheries and aquaculture body working to foster and promote international cooperation in the development, management, utilization, and conservation of inland fisheries resources and sustainable development of aquaculture in its 37 African member States. The governing body of CIFAA is the Committee; it normally holds its sessions at intervals of two years. The Secretariat is based in the FAO Regional Office for Africa (RAF) Accra, Ghana. The Committee takes decisions by a majority of votes cast, unless otherwise decided.

12. The Seventeenth Session of the Committee was held in Banjul, Gambia, 9 to 11 May 2017. During this session, the Committee reviewed its activities since the previous session and the efforts made by FAO in serving member States. The session also reflected on the necessary actions to address and the issues that limit the committee's effectiveness, impede its delivery, and threaten its very existence. It discussed ways and means for the development of aquaculture in Sub-Saharan Africa.

13. Many issues limit the effectiveness of CIFAA, including weak institutional structure, low and inconsistent participation of members at its sessions, as well as insufficient financial and technical resources. Leading up the Seventeenth Session, an extra-ordinary session was held in Dakar, Senegal, 14 to 15 July 2015, to review potential future options for CIFAA.

14. Various options were presented at the 17th session, related to the future of the Committee, including: (i) maintain CIFAA as an Article VI Body of the FAO Constitution, (ii) transform CIFAA from an FAO Article VI body to a Regional Forum under a separate mechanism, and (iii) discontinue or abolish CIFAA. The committee agreed that CIFAA should remain an Article VI body of the FAO Constitution. However, the session also established that certain rules and procedures in the Statute should be revised and amended to have a modern and streamlined RFB. This comprised possibilities of written declarations on CIFAA items, review of the legal status and feasibility of a CIFAA Multi-Donor Trust Fund, and a membership attendance review to address the quorum challenge. The Secretariat has prepared a review of the members' attendance and a statement of the possible amendments of rules and procedures -agreed at the extraordinary session in Senegal, 2015, to be considered by the FAO Legal Office and communicated to CIFAA member States.

15. CIFAA is also working with the Aquaculture Network for Africa (ANAF), which aims to stimulate aquaculture discussion, technical exchanges and advancement of aquaculture in the region, and has 14 member States to-date. During the last session, the Committee agreed that in order to formalize ANAF as a legally recognized platform, and to better facilitate cooperation among countries and the dissemination of aquaculture information in the region, the network is to be integrated within the African Union Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) structure, with FAO providing required technical expertise.

16. The next regular session of the Committee is planned to be held in Mali in 2019.

## **Latin America**

### Commission for Inland Fisheries of Latin America (COPESCAALC)

17. COPESCAALC has been established in 1976 by the FAO Council, under article VI of the FAO Constitution, and act as advisory body. Its Rules of Procedure were adopted by the Commission at its First Session in 1979; they were reviewed in 2008 and approved by the FAO Council in 2009.

18. COPESCAALC comprises 21 members; its mandate includes the promotion of sustainable development and management of inland fisheries and aquaculture, according to the norms and principles of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and covers inland waters of member States and all their related species. The Regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago del Chile hosts the Commission and provides Secretariat services.

19. According to the report of the Fifteenth Session held in January 2018, members highlighted the progress made in the implementation of recommendations and decisions taken at the previous session. They recognized the impact of the technical assistance provided to member States in formulating national fisheries and aquaculture development strategies, policies and programmes; to strengthen regional and national legal frameworks such as the Model Law of the Latin American Parliament; to strengthen institutional capacities in combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and to incorporate the elements of the Voluntary Guidelines to Secure the Sustainability of Small Scale Fisheries (VGSSF). Delegates commended FAO for organizing the Blue Growth Initiative Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico City on November 2017, which led to a regional agreement on South-South Cooperation to strengthen national capacities and foster sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development. Through such an agreement, the Government of Mexico will make its fisheries research vessel available to support Central American countries in their efforts to assess fish stocks and improve fishery resource evaluation.

20. Delegates also recognized the creation of a regional network to share experiences and information to combat IUU fishing, which is operational and temporarily under the administration of the Government of Peru. The Commission unanimously approved the reactivation of the Network of Aquaculture of the Americas, which will resume its aquaculture cooperation strategic programmes with an improved format. Members recognized the efforts made by the Secretariat towards the incorporation of small-scale marine fisheries within the scope and mandate of the Commission,

following the request made by member States during previous sessions; the related proposed new statutes were considered and approved. Pending the decision of the FAO's Council, the new name of the Commission will be Commission of Artisanal, Small-scale and Aquaculture of Latin America and the Caribbean, thus emphasizing the focus on SSF.

21. The prioritized work areas for the period 2018-2019, included the implementation of policies and programmes to foster sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development; combating IUU fishing in SSF; strengthening resilience of fisheries communities to climate change; support efforts to increase fish consumption and the introduction of fish in school feeding programmes and public procurement schemes; occupational safety and social protection in SSF and Small Scale Aquaculture (SSA); migratory processes in SSF and SSA and assistance towards the achievement of national commitments within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1, 2 and 14. Fisheries and aquaculture sectors are considered relevant for food and nutrition security as well as poverty eradication, and are linked to programmes on territorial rural development. Members highlighted the need for support from FAO, to assist countries in the formulation and implementation of the above-mentioned policies and specific areas of needs.

22. The cooperation system in this region includes working with other subregional organizations (i.e. The Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization -OSPESCA-, the Aquaculture Network of the Americas -RAA-; the Latin American and Caribbean Forum of Fish and Aquaculture Parliamentarians and the Latin American Fund for Indigenous Populations), civil society organizations, indigenous populations, local communities and other UN agencies. South-South Cooperation, as well as triangular cooperation among members, is key to achieve the objectives of COPESCAALC.

23. FAO provided support to the Commission's plan of work, both through regional and subregional fisheries and aquaculture development processes and at a national level by assisting member States, in their efforts to comply with internationally agreed commitments, such as the SDGs. Through FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme, institutional capacities of members have been strengthened to combat, deter and eliminate IUU fishing. Also, resource-limited aquaculture farmers of member States have strengthened their capacities in formulating locally available, low-cost aquaculture feeds, thus increasing their economic sustainability. Many national fisheries and aquaculture development strategies and policies have been supported at country level, such as to integrate the principles of the VGSSF in national legal and policy frameworks.

## **Europe**

### European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC)

24. The European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission is an Article VI statutory body of FAO, with 33 members and the European Union. The Commission promotes the long-term sustainable development, utilization, conservation, restoration and responsible management of European inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture, consistent with the objectives and principles of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and other relevant international instruments. The area of competence comprises inland waters in member States.

25. EIFAAC plays a key role in forming a network of academic and government research institutes, civil society and environmental organizations, and intergovernmental organizations supporting inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture in Europe. EIFAAC is part of the Working Group on Eel, a joint Expert Scientific Working Group between EIFAAC and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), GFCM and the European Community. The Technical and Scientific Committee of EIFAAC regularly reports on the status of research on controlling cormorants, which cause significant losses to freshwater aquaculture farms in Europe.

26. At the Twenty-ninth Session in Stare Jablonki, Poland, 6 to 8 September 2017, Members discussed the goals of the Commission and reformulated the high-level objectives based on recent developments, such as the FAO Strategic Programme and Regional Initiatives as well as the UN Development agenda 2030. The revised goals are:

- As a leading Pan-European Organization, EIFAAC provides policy and management advice in Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture, consistent with the FAO objectives and principles (strategic objectives, regional initiatives, SDGs) and relevant international instruments.
- EIFAAC delivers technical and managerial advice, information and coordination on matters related to Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture to its members and facilitates the networking of concerned organizations, stakeholders and communities.
- EIFAAC, via its structures, processes and procedures, implements efficient delivery of its objectives in accordance with FAO principles and good international practices.

27. The Commission expressed concerns about the lack of methodology or reliable data for valuation of inland fisheries, which prevents policymakers from making sound choices when managing inland water bodies and capture fisheries. Members recommended that future EIFAAC projects contain socio-economic aspects, to be included along with biological and scientific analysis, and requested assistance from FAO in this area.

28. The last session was preceded by an EIFAAC International Symposium on “Adaptation of inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture to climate change”, Stare Jablonki, Poland, 4 to 6 September 2017. The Commission acknowledges that climate change is affecting fish, inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture. Resources are required to support long-term assessment, impact and mitigation measures. Focused adaptation to climate change needs to begin immediately, and consideration of impacts of climate change on the inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture sector is required. This should be embedded into other environmental activities, resource management policies as well as in evidence based adaptive and predictive management framework, including economic and social aspects.

### **Central Asia-Caucasus**

#### Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish)

29. CACFish is an Article XIV statutory body of the FAO. The respective Agreement was approved by the FAO Council in its 137th Session in 2009, and CACFish entered into force in December 2010. The CACFish Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was established in 2011. The Commission’s area of competence is Central Asia and the Caucasus, comprising mostly inland water bodies. The CACFish Secretariat is located in the FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia (SEC), Ankara, Turkey, and there are currently five Members. Several non-member States regularly participate in CACFish regional training activities and sessions as Observers, and have been invited to join the Commission.

30. The Fifth Session of CACFish was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 10 to 12 October 2016. The Commission discussed priority areas of work under the Second Regional Work Programme 2016-2020 and agreed on an annual budget of USD 180 000. The Member budget shares are determined by a formula that includes national income and total production of fish. Turkey made one ad-hoc contribution of USD 100 000 in addition to its annual Member contributions.

31. The Fourth Meeting of the TAC was held in Tbilisi, Georgia, 28 to 30 November 2017. Priority activities, mainly for development of freshwater aquaculture, inland fisheries management and post-harvest sector in CACFish region, were discussed and recommendations made for discussion by the Commission at its Sixth Session, to be held in Izmir, Turkey, October 2018.

32. Due to limited financial resources, as well as the temporary secretariat vacancies, the CACFish Secretariat was not able to complete all activities in the intersessional work programme. Nevertheless, many activities were delivered in 2016-2017, including an expert meeting on fish genetic resources; country surveys on implementation of the FAO VGSSF in Central Asia; a regional expert meeting on implementation of the VGSSF; a regional workshop on cage aquaculture in lakes; the Fourth meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee; and the publication of the Final Report of the Fifth Session of CACFish as an FAO Circular.

33. With the launching of the second phase of the FAO Turkey Partnership Programme (FTPPII) in 2017, the Secretariat along with the Turkish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (MFAL) prepared a Concept Note on “Capacity building for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture management in Central Asia” (FishCAP) for consideration by the FTPPII Steering Committee. The FTPPII funds will significantly support the CACFish work programme in achieving the following outcomes, including: improved institutional capacity for sustainable management; planning, protection and development of fisheries and aquaculture resources in a participatory manner; improved skill and knowledge base in the inland fisheries, culture-based fisheries and inland aquaculture; strengthened capacity for fisheries research; and transfer of good management practices, knowledge and technology.

## **B. Marine waters**

### **Asia and Pacific Ocean**

#### Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC)

34. APFIC was established under Article XIV in 1948, and has 21 members. The Commission convenes biennially, which has been complemented with the Regional Consultative Forum Meeting (RCFM) since its Twenty-ninth Session. The session is attended by government delegates from the member States and observers from regional and inter-governmental fisheries and aquaculture bodies as well as other UN agencies. The participation of the RCFM has been expanded to major regional projects staff, and provide sector representatives. The Fisheries Team at FAO regional Office for Asia and the Pacific acts as the APFIC Secretariat.

35. The Commission has a broad mandate that includes the promotion of sustainable utilization of living aquatic resources and sustainable aquaculture development through advising and supporting the members on economically viable and environmentally sustainable policies, practices and operations and finding solutions to emerging regional fisheries and aquaculture issues with impact on member States. APFIC does not have regulatory powers.

36. Since the last Session (34th Session) held in February 2016, the APFIC organized regional technical consultative workshops addressing priority issues in fisheries and aquaculture. The regional consultation on responsible production and use of feed and feed ingredients for sustainable growth of aquaculture in Asia-Pacific was held in March 2017. It promoted sharing of knowledge, technological progress and good practices for responsible and efficient production and use of aquaculture feed and feed ingredients, further identified major issues and gaps, and recommended a strategy and actions. In addition, the Regional consultation on Building climate resilient fisheries and aquaculture for blue growth in Asia-Pacific was held in November 2017. The regional consultation extensively shared knowledge, technological advancement and successful practices for increasing climate resilience of fisheries and aquaculture in the region and major efforts by national governments, regional and international organizations and private sector to support small-scale fishing and fish-farm holders to adapt to the climate change and reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions from their activities. More importantly, the regional consultation further identified key challenges and gaps and recommended major policy strategies and actions to increase climate resilience of fisheries and aquaculture in the region.

37. The APFIC Secretariat has made great efforts and relevant achievement to support the formulation and implementation of regional projects and involved members, in sustainable management of large marine ecosystems, such as the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem project (BOBLME) and the Indonesian Seas Large Marine Ecosystem Project (ISLME), and addressed priority issues in fisheries and aquaculture in the regions, such as IUU fishing, improvement of aquaculture planning and management and promoting innovative practices for sustainable fish production.

38. The APFIC Secretariat has played a key role as an FAO/APFIC liaison with RFBs and by collaborating with them as well as other relevant regional organizations to address priority issues in fisheries and aquaculture, such as IUU fishing, the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), transboundary aquatic animal diseases and antimicrobial usage and antimicrobial resistance related to aquaculture.

39. Following the recommendation of the last session, the conceptual framework of Regional initiative for blue growth in Asia-Pacific was further expanded and restructured to be more inclusive and programmatic, and to encompass broad areas pertaining to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development for food security, improved nutrition, livelihood development and overall growth in the region. The implementation of the regional initiative is now inclusive to all members in the region.

40. The Seventh RCFM and the Thirty-Fifth Session of APFIC will be held in May 2018. The RCFM will cover a wide range of thematic areas related to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the region. It is expected to share at the session a set of recommendations on priority work for member States and FAO, to be undertaken in the next two years. The Thirty-Fifth Session of APFIC will review the implementation of the major intersessional activities, analyze and endorse the recommendations from the Seventh RCFM and discuss the draft 2019-2023 APFIC strategic action plan.

41. With a flat regular programme budget at FAO, the operation of the commission is facing increasing financial difficulty. It is timely needed to explore new funding mechanisms, to support the normal activities of the commission although it might be very challenging.

## **Atlantic Ocean**

### Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF)

42. CECAF has been established as advisory body, within the framework of Article VI of the FAO Constitution, by the FAO Council in its 48th Session in 1967.

43. According to its statute, amended in 2003, the purpose of the Committee is to promote the sustainable utilization of the living marine resources of its area of competence, which includes high seas and national waters, by the proper management and development of the fisheries and fishing operations. CECAF has 33 members, including coastal and non-coastal states, and the European Union.

44. In addition to the Committee, CECAF has a Scientific Sub-committee (SSC), one of the main functions of which is to study the main stocks and fisheries, to assess their status and, on the basis of the results achieved, to provide fisheries management advice to the Committee, with focus on transboundary resources. However, it also discusses other issues of pertinence to fisheries management in the region, including for artisanal fisheries. The SSC is supported by three working groups, the Working Group for Small Pelagics, the Working Group for Demersal Species, and the Working Group for Artisanal Fisheries.



45. At the Twenty-first Session of the Committee, Dakar, Senegal, 20 to 22 April 2016, the Committee endorsed the assessment and management advice from the Seventh Session of the SSC (Tenerife, Spain, October 2015), and other technical and scientific advice from the SSC, while stressing the continued need to improve research and data collection in the region, to review the format of the scientific advice and the management recommendation, and to enhance the dialogue between scientists and managers. Furthermore, the Committee suggested to create an *ad hoc* working group to discuss monitoring and communication issues, and the uptake of the CECAF management recommendations and endorsed the revised terms of reference for the artisanal fisheries working group, requesting the Secretariat to find means to operationalize this group. The Committee welcomed the proposed deep-sea fisheries and Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem (VME) workshop, and recommended that members of CECAF should respect the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization VME closures that are located in the overlapping area of competence.

46. The Committee noted that progress is being achieved in the fight against IUU fishing in several member States, some of which announced their interest in ratifying the PSMA. The strengthening of Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance at country level was recognized as an important condition for the development of a more efficient cooperation to combat IUU fishing at subregional and regional levels. The need for a better evaluation of various impacts of IUU fishing, strengthening of capacities on monitoring and inspection, and increasing transparency through the exchange of information on IUU fleets were emphasized.

47. Concerning the improvement of the CECAF functioning, the Committee recommended to implement the action plan proposed by the 2011 review, including the integration of modern principles of fisheries management, ensuring that regular meetings are held and strengthening cooperation with other regional and subregional fisheries organizations. The Secretariat was also requested to facilitate the improvement of communication and dissemination of information, including through the CECAF webpage. The Committee also took up the role of Regional Steering Committee in the new Ecosystem Approach for 'Fisheries (EAF)-Nansen Programme'.

48. In 2017, the Working group for the assessment of demersal resources sub-groups North and South met respectively in Tenerife, Spain, from 6-15 June 2017 and in Libreville, Gabon, from the 6-15 September 2017. Furthermore the FAO working group on the assessment of small pelagic fish off Northwest Africa met in Nouadhibou, Mauritania from 22-27 May 2017. The 2018 meeting of the latter working group will take place from 26 June to 2 July in Banjul, The Gambia; while the Working groups for the assessment of small pelagic resources sub-group South, will be held in September 2018, in Accra, Ghana. The overall objectives of these working groups are to assess the status of the main small pelagic and demersal resources in the CECAF area and to provide scientific advice to management on exploitation options aimed at ensuring optimal and sustainable use of resources for the benefit of coastal countries.

49. At the twenty-first session of CECAF in 2016, a revised document with terms of reference for the artisanal fisheries working group was adopted. This working group is an important platform for contributing to the improved knowledge of small-scale fisheries across CECAF's member States. This working group will meet in July 2018, back-to-back with a regional consultation workshop on the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.

50. The results of the assessments and the related scientific advice as well as the outcomes of the artisanal fisheries working group will be discussed at the next session of the Scientific sub-committee, in October 2018, Abidjan.

51. In 2018, CECAF is also launching an Independent Cost-Benefit Assessment of the options for a strategic reorientation of the committee to be discussed at the Twenty second Session of CECAF in 2019.

### Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC)

52. WECAFC is an advisory body, established in 1973 by the FAO Council, within the framework of Article VI of the FAO Constitution. The related statute was amended in December 1978 and in November 2006.

53. WECAFC comprises 34 Members, including coastal States, whose territories are situated within the area of the Commission, states whose vessels engage in fishing in the area of competence, and the European Union. WECAFC area of competence includes an area of high seas of 9.4 million km<sup>2</sup> as well as national waters.

54. The main role of WECAFC is the promotion of the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources in the area of competence, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, as well as addressing common problems of fisheries management and development faced by the respective Members.

55. At its Sixteenth Session, in Guadeloupe, France, 20-24 June 2016, the Commission agreed to launch a process to establish a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) in the WECAFC area of competence, being the Western Central Atlantic (area 31) and the Northern part of the South West Atlantic (area 41), and to collaborate in fisheries management and conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) of straddling stocks, deep sea fish stocks and highly migratory species that are not under the mandate of ICCAT. The Commission discussed intersessional activities of its Working Groups and regional collaboration in addressing IUU fishing, and approved the Programme of Work (2016–17).

56. The Commission adopted five regional fisheries management recommendations (on Queen conch, spiny lobster, flying fish, shrimp and groundfish and Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems) and two resolutions (on sea cucumber and Marine Protected Areas); and recognized the assistance provided by FAO in supporting the PSMA implementation.

57. The Sixteenth Session of WECAFC was the second best-attended session of the Commission in its 45 years of history. Non-binding regional fisheries management measures were adopted. The current set-up with joint Working Groups, with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), the Organization for fisheries and Aquaculture of Central America (OSPESCA) and other regional stakeholders, as well as the partnership with FIRMS, is highly productive and successful.

58. In the intersessional period 2016-2018 some two-thirds of the agreed Programme of Work was carried out; 30 WECAFC members participated in its activities; 8 of the eleven joint Working Groups (Queen conch, spawning aggregations, recreational fisheries, spiny lobster, sharks, Fish Aggregating Devices, data and statistics, and on IUU fishing) have been active; 7 Working Group meetings were organized by WECAFC and partners; 9 regional technical workshops were held; 54 FAO projects supported work on fisheries and aquaculture of WECAFC members; and 16 FAO-WECAFC publications were issued.

59. More than 500 stakeholders participated in WECAFC workshops and meetings in 2016 and 2017, including 35 percent women. Twenty-three FAO TCP fishery and aquaculture projects (national and regional) supported the WECAFC membership with a total budget of USD 5.3 million for the period 2015-2017. Moreover, 31 regional and national level Trust Fund projects on fisheries and aquaculture were implemented with support from FAO and its WECAFC Secretariat, and including a total value of USD 18 million.

60. The process for establishing an RFMO is ongoing. Members were requested in 2017 to send comments and questions on the process to FAO and an independent legal advisor drafted a discussion paper to be considered at the first Preparatory Meeting on the establishment of an RFMO in the WECAFC area, scheduled to be held at the end of 2018. A decision on the establishment of the RFMO, either as independent Inter-Governmental Organization or as RFMO under Article XIV of the

FAO Constitution, is expected from the Members at the 1st Preparatory Meeting. In the meantime, the Interim Collaboration Mechanism for sustainable fisheries, under which the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, OSPESCA and WECAFC secretariats formally collaborate, continues to provide scientific advice for regional level fisheries management and conservation measures, as well as supports capacity building of members and sector stakeholders.

## **Indian Ocean**

### Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC)

61. SWIOFC is an advisory body, established by the FAO Council in 2004, within the framework of Article VI of the FAO Constitution. Its Secretariat is hosted at the National Fisheries Administration office (ADNAP) of Ministry of the Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries of Mozambique, in Maputo. SWIOFC has 12 Members.

62. SWIOFC promotes the sustainable utilization of marine living resources by proper management and development, the application of the FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries, including the precautionary approach and the ecosystem approach to fisheries management. Its mandate comprises national waters.

63. The Eighth Session of SWIOFC was held in Antananarivo, Madagascar, March 2017. The Commission agreed on a commitment towards addressing the status of fisheries resources in the SWIOFC region. Members sought to have their capacity reinforced in order to better develop, implement and evaluate fisheries management plans aligned with the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF).

64. Members noted with much appreciation the good work that the Working Party on Collaboration and Cooperation in Tuna Fisheries and its Task Force had done in the period since the Seventh Session, and commended their Chairs and Vice-Chairs. The Commission unanimously endorsed the reviewed protocol on Minimum Terms and Conditions (MTC) for Foreign Fishing Access in the SWIOFC Region as guidelines.

65. A Consultancy was requested by the Working Party on Collaboration and Cooperation in tuna fisheries for assessing the legal, policy, institutional and budgetary implications to formulate, adopt and implement a regional fishery cooperation and coordination agreement by the South West Indian Ocean States. Different options will be considered, including to be an independent organization established in line with the proposed draft Agreement on South West Indian Ocean Coastal State Coordination and Cooperation on Fisheries of Common Interest, or an FAO Article XIV body.

### Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)

66. The Agreement for the establishment of IOTC, an RFMO under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution, came into effect in March 1996. IOTC's area of competence includes the high seas and national waters associated with the distribution of the 16 tuna and tuna like species under its mandate.

67. The IOTC is based in Seychelles and has 31 contracting parties and 3 cooperating parties. The Commission has an autonomous budget approaching USD 4 million, which is funded by its member States. This budget supports the work of 13 staff members, seven active working groups, three technical committees, a permanent Compliance Committee and a Standing Committee on Administration and Finance.

68. The IOTC currently has 53 active conservation and management measures in place. These cover the 16-mandated species (catch and effort measures, and gear measures); monitoring, control

and surveillance (vessels lists, observer activities, IUU fishing measures and port State measures), and ecosystems and bycatch (biodiversity, sharks, sea turtles).

69. In the second part of 2016, the IOTC rolled out its electronic Port State Measures communications platform (e-PSM application), which facilitates the implementation of PSM and the exchange of information between stakeholders. Over 400 individuals from 13 IOTC member States (port States and industry) have been trained to use the application. As of March 2018, around 3 000 vessel files have been created and over 6 000 PSM forms have been submitted through the e-PSM application; including advance requests and authorizations for entry into port, and port inspection reports. The application is being used by 37 flag States, 13 IOTC port States and 1,255 vessels' representatives (fishing agents/vessel master). The implementation of the IOTC port State measures resolution, which reflects almost in its entirety the FAO Agreement on port State measures, has led to the identification and listing of nine vessels in the IOTC IUU Vessels List.

70. In 2017, IOTC held the first meeting of a dedicated Technical Committee of Management Procedures, which has been set up as a formal communication channel between science and management to enhance decision-making response of the Commission in relation to complex subjects, such as management procedures.

71. Since 2011, IOTC has been considering how fishing opportunities might be allocated to participants in its fisheries sector. The Forth Session of the Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria (TCAC) was held in February 2018, and while deliberations are ongoing on various allocation options, the TCAC acknowledges that an allocation mechanism will need to consider several general principles. These include: all CPCs entitled to a baseline allocation with due consideration, being given to developing countries and Small Island Developing States; striking a balance between the rights of Coastal States and distant water fishing nations, and the related duties and freedoms of all States to fish on the High Seas; and that allocation must consider and address developing country needs, while also not placing undue burden on the resources in the ABNJ nor insupportable social and economic impositions on members.

72. The IOTC underwent its second performance review in 2015/16. This process recommended the modernisation of the IOTC Agreement, and that the Commission would be more appropriate as an independent entity. In early 2018, the Technical Committee on Performance Review moved forward to develop a new text for the IOTC Agreement; while the matter of whether the IOTC should remain within the FAO framework or become a separate legal entity will be further discussed by the Commission in May 2018.

#### Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI)

73. RECOFI is a RFMO that was established by an Agreement formulated in the context of Article XIV of the FAO Constitution and entered into force in 2001. Current members are eight coastal countries of the Gulf and Sea of Oman. The Commission is empowered to adopt binding conservation and management measures.

74. RECOFI is mandated to promote the development, conservation, rational management and best utilization of living marine resources, as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture within the provided area of competence, which comprises national waters. The species covered include all living marine resources in this area.

75. The Commission has two subsidiary bodies: the Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) and the Working Group on Aquaculture. The Secretariat is currently provided by FAO and is based at the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa, in Cairo, Egypt.

76. The Ninth Session of RECOFI was held in May 2017. The Commission agreed on the inclusion of the main decisions and recommendations provided by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC) to the regular meetings of its working

groups. The Commission endorsed the WGFM proposal to add two mullet species to the priority list, namely Klunzinger's mullet (*Liza klunzingeri*) and Greenback mullet (*Liza subviridis*). The Commission agreed on the organization of the regular meetings of its subsidiary bodies on a biennial basis.

77. The Commission currently has two binding recommendations: (i) Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 on Minimum Data Reporting in the RECOFI Area; and (ii) Recommendation RECOFI/8/2015/1 on Minimum Reporting on Aquaculture Data and Information. At its Ninth Session, the Commission acknowledged that, as for capture fisheries data, the Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS) will have to adapt its information system capacity to handle the submission, management and dissemination of aquaculture data reported under Recommendation RECOFI/8/2015/1. FAO, as RECOFI Secretariat has facilitated the implementation of the two binding recommendations.

78. The current level of member States' contribution does not allow the Commission to deliver an extensive programme of work and fully carry out its role effectively. The work programme has been kept to a minimum while a considerable number of the activities have been financed by extra-budgetary sources or by FAO Regular Programme funds.

79. Over the past years, the Commission has witnessed discussions on strengthening its function. The following two possible scenarios were suggested for consideration at its Ninth Session: (i) Maintain RECOFI activities within current budget and reduced the FAO support; (ii) Strengthen RECOFI to function with an increased budget and secretariat. The session agreed on the official submission of the FAO Review (2005-15) document, which, among others, elaborates on the key challenges and performance of RECOFI, to the respective Ministers of each member State for further decision and guidance. In this regard, the organization of an *ad hoc* session was considered an appropriate occasion to achieve a final decision.

## **Mediterranean and Black Sea**

### General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

80. The GFCM was established in 1949 as a regional commission pursuant to Article XIV of the FAO Constitution. The GFCM is the RFMO with competence for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and has the capacity to adopt binding management and conservation measures for its contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties. Currently, there are 24 contracting parties (9 Mediterranean countries, 3 Black Sea countries, the European Union and Japan) and 4 cooperating non-contracting parties (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine).

81. The objective of the GFCM is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of living marine resources, as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture in its area of application, which includes all waters in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The GFCM operates by means of its Secretariat that backstops the work of four subsidiary bodies: the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC), the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ), the Compliance Committee (CoC) and the Committee of Administration and Finance (CAF). An *ad hoc* mechanism is also in place for the Black Sea region, namely the Working Group for the Black Sea (WGBS).

82. As a result of a reform process, which led to the amendment of its constitutive agreement in 2014, the GFCM is now a modern organization with expertise to take appropriate decisions, based on scientific advice, and ensure their implementation. It plays a decisive part in coordinating efforts by governments to effectively manage fisheries at the regional level following the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and supports the achievement of the SDGs, namely SDG 14 "Life below water".

83. Based on the scientific advice provided by the SAC, the GFCM has adopted since 2004 more than 60 management and conservation measures in the form of binding recommendations underpinning a regional management system. Moreover, it closely cooperates with other international organizations in matters of mutual interest in order to enhance scientific cooperation and capacity building. In this respect, more than 15 memoranda of understanding have been signed with partner organizations.

84. The GFCM has recently launched two strategies that are fully consistent with the SDGs and with international obligations stemming therefrom and that address the specificities of the region: the Mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, and the Strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture. In addition, the second report on *The state of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries* (SoMFi) is under preparation and will be published by the end of 2018. This flagship publication, based on the up-to-date data provided by contracting and cooperating non-contracting parties, is a comprehensive source of information providing an overview of the most important aspects of fisheries, their status and trends in the region.

85. A number of decisive benchmarks are set for 2018 and important events are under preparation. In particular, a high-level conference on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture will be organized on 8-9 June in Bulgaria, a high-level meeting on small-scale fisheries is planned to take place on 25-26 September in Malta, and an international Forum on Fisheries Science is being organized at FAO headquarters on 10-14 December. These major events will shine a light on the efforts currently being deployed to secure regional cooperation, support the region's small-scale fisheries sector and enhance global scientific expertise in support of the work of the GFCM and of other RFMOs.

86. The 2018 will be the first year in celebrating an official day promoting awareness of the need to combat IUU fishing, on 5 June. The GFCM has brought a critical contribution to the FAO-led process through which the proposal for an IUU Day was put forth for adoption by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and has included the fight against IUU fishing among the five targets of its Mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries. This will be done through a regional plan of action for the fight against IUU fishing, recently adopted by the Commission to further progress in areas such as port state measures, monitoring, control and surveillance and the assessment of the magnitude of IUU fishing.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

87. RFBs are key mechanisms for enhancing regional collaboration, to address common fisheries and aquaculture development and management challenges. They provide a forum for lesson-learning, discussion, negotiation and joint-action as well as an enabling environment to increase technical and scientific assistance, and coordinated work with main actors, including other RFBs or RFMOs, UN agencies, and stakeholders.

88. The role of RFBs and RFMOs is highly instrumental to mainstream FAO policies and provide technical support for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Notably, RFMOs are being increasingly considered in relevant international agendas, given their unique capacity in addressing regional common concerns with their member States.

89. Most of the RFBs and RFMOs established within the FAO framework reported their achievements in creating partnerships with other organizations and agencies, in order to provide adequate responses to issues of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture governance linked to climate change impacts, ecosystem and biodiversity needs, social and economic requirements; thus contributing to a crosscutting implementation of SDG 14 with other commitments under the Agenda 2030.

90. As noted, the informed developments indicate that some bodies are still facing several challenges; in these cases, performance reviews can provide tools and identification of needed actions for the strengthening and modernization of bodies. This process requires the continued support of FAO and a strong commitment by member States.