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WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)

EIGHT SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY GROUP (SAG)

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Update on the Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries of CRFM, OSPESCA and WECAFC

This working document aims to update the SAG on the Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries (ICM) and the status of the establishment process of an RFMO in the WECAFC area.

Suggested Action by the SAG:

1. The SAG is invited to review and comment on the achievements by the ICM and its functioning.
2. The SAG is also invited to recognize the steps made towards the establishment of an RFMO in the WECAFC area in 2016 and 2017 and comment from a scientific perspective on the area and species to be covered by the future RFMO.
3. The SAG is also requested to:
 - 1) Comment on the 2018 workplan of the ICM and provide suggestions for consideration by the ICM
 - 2) Identify specific measures that could be taken to further increase the functioning of joint working groups and the ICM in general.

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1. Background to the Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries (ICM)

The collaboration between WECAFC and CRFM has increased since 2011, through joint working groups (e.g. flying fish, FADs, lobster, queen conch, shrimp, recreational fisheries, IUU fishing), project collaboration (CLME+, CC4Fish, REBYC II LAC, Caribbean Billfish, Stewardfish, FIRMS) and joint activities (CCCFP promotion, combating IUU fishing, promotion of the EAF, etc). Areas of collaboration demonstrate similar priorities in the CRFM and WECAFC strategic plans and in support of the CCCFP.

In the period 2011-2017 WECAFC supported CRFM members' participation in regional working groups and meetings with funds in the order of 900 000 USD. Participation by CRFM members in WECAFC (joint) Working Group meetings and training sessions is over 60% of total participation. Similarly, OSPESCA members participation in regional meetings and working groups was supported with nearly 400 000 USD over the same period.

In order to formalize the ongoing collaboration, following decisions by WECAFC 14 (Panama, 2012) and WECAFC 15 (Trinidad and Tobago, 2014), and in line with Strategy 2 of the CLME+ Strategic Action Programme (SAP), the three Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs), CRFM, OSPESCA and WECAFC signed on Wednesday 27 January 2016 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate, support and strengthen the coordination of actions among the three RFBs to increase the sustainability of fisheries.

The MoU established and Interim Coordination Arrangement for Sustainable Fisheries (ICM). The ICM will enable better coordination of these working groups and ensure that the members are better informed and have more opportunities to participate in Working Group activities.

The Interim Coordination Mechanism, to be tested through the MOU, will also increase the uptake of information and fisheries management advice generated at national and sub-regional level to the regional level. This supports dissemination of best practices, harmonization and boost the impact of measures, decrees and regulations adopted within the frameworks of these RFBs. It will provide a pilot structure that may lead at some point to the establishment of one or more Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) in the Western Central Atlantic Ocean.

The complete MoU text can be found at: <http://www.fao.org/fishery/nems/40814/en>



Figure 1: picture of the Secretaries of OSPESCA, WECAFC and CRFM accompanied by the CLME+ Project Coordination Unit staff after signature of the MoU on 27 January 2016.

2. Functioning of the ICM

Within the ICM the three RFBs agreed:

1. To work towards harmonization of their respective policy and legal frameworks for fisheries
2. To cooperate on relevant scientific and fisheries management projects
3. To establish reciprocal observer arrangements
4. To share reports of their sessions and meetings of their subsidiary bodies and projects

The Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries (ICM) in which CRFM, OSPESCA and WECAFC Secretariats collaborate functions as described in figure 2 below.

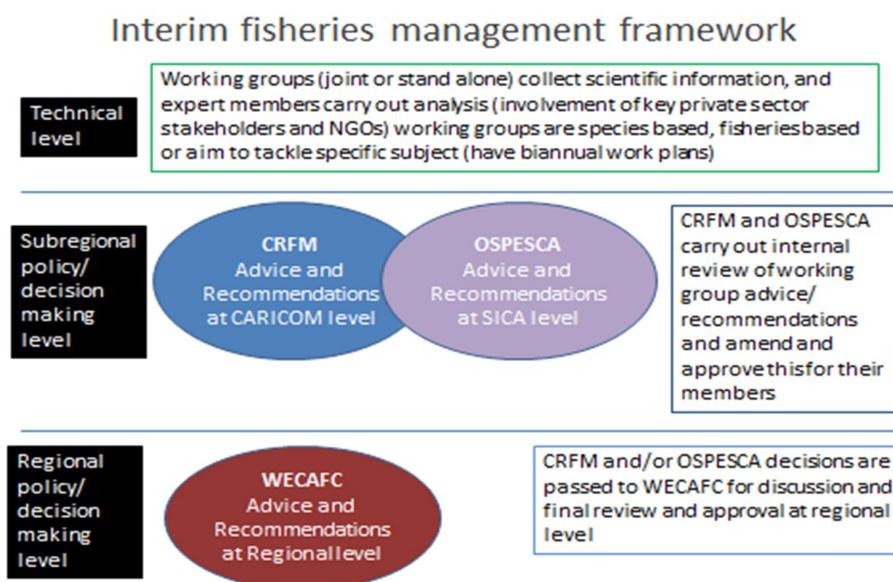


Figure 2: the ICM fisheries management framework

The ICM organized so far six meetings before and after its formal establishment, on average twice per year. The last three meetings were on 24 June 2016 (Guadeloupe), 28 February 2017 (Barbados) and 2 October 2017 (Miami). The meetings are generally organized back-to-back with a regional working group meeting or CLME+ meeting, in which all three secretariats participate.

The first meetings since establishment were chaired by the WECAFC Secretary and in October 2017 the chairmanship was handed over to CRFM Executive Director for the next upcoming meetings.

The ICM achieved its first proof of success in 2016, when advice generated by the joint working groups on flying fish, spiny lobster and queen conch, was reviewed and endorsed at sub-regional level and approved at regional level by WECAFC 16. The Queen Conch advice was further endorsed at global level by the CITES COP 17, which was held in South Africa in 2016.

Following the endorsements and approvals the three RFB secretariats continue to technically support and promote the implementation of the management and conservation recommendations

and plans in the member countries. They do so through publishing and dissemination of the meeting reports, management plans and PowerPoints and leaflets to explain the recommendations.

Currently (2017) developed recommendations by the Regional Working Group on IUU Fishing, the OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CFMC/CITES Working Group on Shark Conservation and Management and the WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries are passing through the ICM established review and management decision making process for (sub-)regional endorsement and adoption in 2018.

The latest workplan of the ICM can be found in Annex A to this working document.

Various working groups have not been active in 2017 due to delayed start-up of CLME+ sub-projects for Flying Fish, Lobster and Shrimp and groundfish, have been constrained by funding (e.g. FADs Working Group) or were postponed due to the hurricanes (Spawning Aggregations Working Group). In general, it appears to be possible to mobilize resources for all working groups established, but interests to coordinate or take a leading role as working group convener are limited. Consequently, the RFB secretariats have taken on-board the convener roles, while they are short in staff and the staff is often not the authority on the working group themes.

Nevertheless, the number of regional joint working group meetings held in recent years is large and collaboration between the RFB secretariats is good and effective.

3. The RFMO establishment process

The ICM is supposed to be an interim solution for the period until a RFMO is established in the WECAFC area.

The WECAFC strategic reorientation process started in 2012 upon request of the members at the 14th session. In 2012-2013 a performance review and strategic planning process was conducted, which was finalized at WECAFC 15 in 2014. At that session the members asked for a cost-benefit analysis of the various options for WECAFC, including continuing as advisory body or a transition into an RFMO. Various strategic reorientation meetings were held, such as in 2014 in Guadeloupe, May 2015 in Barbados and in December 2015 in Trinidad and Tobago. The outcomes were presented and discussed at WECAFC 16 in Guadeloupe. The most relevant reports are available at: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/Fl/DOCUMENT/wecafc/16thsess/default.htm>

The Sixteenth Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission was held in Guadeloupe, France, from 20 to 24 June 2016. The adopted report of the session is made available to the SAG as WECAFC/SAG/VIII/2017/inf.3. The following is a summary of the main outcomes from the session.

The session was attended by 28 members of the Commission. Observers from four Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) and four intergovernmental organizations also participated. The Commission adopted five regional fisheries management recommendations respectively on: 1) the regional plan for the management and conservation of Queen conch, 2) spiny lobster management and conservation, 3) the sub-regional fisheries management plan for flying fish, 4) the management of deep sea fisheries in the high seas, and 5) the management of shrimp and groundfish resources. The Commission also adopted two resolutions on: 1) sea cucumber fisheries management and aquaculture, and 2) Marine Protected Areas as fisheries management tool in the Caribbean.

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 Working Groups and regional collaboration in addressing Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing, and approved the Programme of Work (2016–17).

Under the specific agenda item “STRATEGIC RE-ORIENTATION OF WECAFC (FINDINGS OF THE COST BENEFIT ASSESSMENT)” the following was reported:

51. The Commission thanked posthumously Mr Kjartan Hoydal for the independent cost-benefit assessment of the options for strategic reorientation of WECAFC, of which the summary was presented in WECAFC/XVI/2016/12.

52. The Commission endorsed the outcomes of the 2nd WECAFC strategic orientation workshop, which was kindly hosted by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, on 1–2 December 2015 and was generously supported by the European Union.

53. The Commission appreciated the financial support received from the CLME+ project for the additional study: an assessment of the recent activities of CRFM, OSPESCA and WECAFC, including options for a regional institutional collaborative structure within an RFMO framework, as prepared by Ms Helga Josupeit with inputs from the secretariats of the three Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) and presented in working document WECAFC/XVI/2016/13. The Commission recognized that the document advanced the discussion and that there were some gaps in the document that still need to be addressed.

54. The Commission took note of the discussions held on WECAFC transformation process at the 34th FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico in February 2016.

55. The Commission agreed to launch a process to establish a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) and to clarify issues in relation to competency area, stocks coverage, budgetary implications for Members, institutional structure, membership, decision making processes, national sovereignty aspects, its objectives and any other relevant matters that the Members may wish to consider.

56. The Commission noted the importance of taking into account the sub-regional and local peculiarities. In this respect the Commission noted that such an RFMO should not replace existing RFBs, but instead establish functional ties and formal relationships with CRFM, OSPESCA and ICCAT. The Commission considered it important to build on the positive momentum created by WECAFC and sub-regional partners in recent years.

57. Given the efforts made by the Members in establishing co-management and participatory approaches to fisheries management, the Commission agreed that the process towards the establishment of an RFMO should ensure effective stakeholder participation and capacity building, as well as a mechanism for effective stakeholder participation in decision making once the RFMO is established.

58. The Commission recognized the value of establishing an 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) 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.

59. The FAO legal office informed the Commission regarding Conference Resolution 2015/11 “Review of Statutory Bodies”, in particular with reference to Article XIV Bodies. Some of the challenges and experiences with RFMOs established under FAO’s Constitution were highlighted to the Commission.

Under agenda item “WAY FORWARD IN THE PROCESS OF STRATEGIC RE-ORIENTATION OF WECAFC” the following was mentioned in the report:

60. The Commission took note of the road map options provided and recognized that the timeframe presented would require adaptation and flexibility.

61. It was agreed that a 1st preparatory meeting of the Members would be held in 2017. In view of this meeting the Members and observers were requested to submit technical, legal and stakeholder questions and areas of concern to be addressed at the preparatory meeting to the Secretariat. Members and observers were requested to endeavor to have participation by relevant experts in the 1st preparatory meeting.

62. The European Union and the CLME+ Project Coordination Unit indicated that they would explore the possibility to support the organization of this meeting.

63. FAO indicated its availability to assist and facilitate the transformation process of WECAFC into an RFMO.

The adopted report of WECAFC 16 is also made available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6031t.pdf>

4. Action undertaken since WECAFC 16 by the Secretariat

Following the performance review, strategic planning and reorientation in 2013 -2015 a preliminary agreement among the members of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) was reached at WECAFC 16 (20-24 June 2016, Guadeloupe) to establish a Regional Fisheries Management organization (RFMO). The establishment of an RFMO is expected to take some 5 to 7 years and will involve 2 major preparatory regional meetings and an inaugural meeting. This action was requested by WECAFC 16 to enable the process towards the establishment of an RFMO.

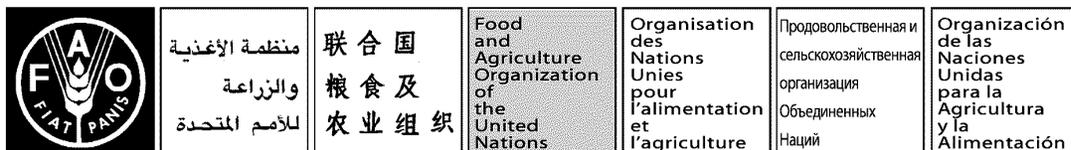
The following activities in support of the RFMO establishment process were conducted by the WECAFC Secretariat:

1. The WECAFC Secretariat prepared a project proposal for EU DG MARE financed project: “Support to the establishment of a regional fisheries management organization for the Western Central Atlantic (WECAFC)”, which got approved in December 2016 for an amount of 111 000 USD, was finalized in June 2017 and has become operational in August 2017.

Expected results of the project are:

- Proposal for convention/agreement for an RFMO for the Western Central Atlantic.
- Draft rules of procedure and financial regulations for the future RFMO, a draft scheme and scale of contributions to the administrative/autonomous budget of the RFMO, and draft criteria for host country selection.
- A 1st Preparatory Meeting or Special session of WECAFC held in 2017 in which above documents have been discussed.
- A report of the 1st Preparatory Meeting or Special session of WECAFC published as FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report (in 3 languages) before June 2018.
- Updated roadmap (plan) for establishment of the RFMO in the Western Central Atlantic.

2. The dates targeted for the above project results will require modification in 2018, when the new WECAFC Secretary will be on board, after discussion with the donor, FAO, WECAFC Executive Committee, potential host country and the host of the 17th session of WECAFC.
3. The WECAFC Secretariat prepared a TORs for the preparation of “A discussion paper concerning a future RFMO to “clarify issues in relation to its objectives, competency area, stocks coverage, budgetary implications for Members, institutional structure, membership, decision making processes, national sovereignty aspects and its objectives”. (see para 55 of the WECAFC 16 report), and selected in close consultation with the FAO Legal Office an independent legal consultant to assist the secretariat in this matter. The consultant, Ms Teresa Amador, is currently working on the paper. The consultancy is supported by funds remaining from EU DG Mare Trust Fund project GCP/SLC/011/EC. It is foreseen that a draft paper will be circulated to the members and partners in December 2017. The final discussion paper will become a working document for the 1st preparatory meeting on the establishment of an RFMO. The WECAFC Secretariat has not yet approached the members about their willingness to host the 1st Preparatory meeting.
4. The WECAFC Secretariat presented the update at the 15th meeting of the CRFM Caribbean Fisheries Forum on 30-31 March 2017 in Jamaica to the CRFM membership.
5. The WECAFC Secretariat, with support from the Executive Committee, prepared a letter from the chairperson of WECAFC to the membership and partners seeking questions for clarification from them. The letter was circulated in English and Spanish in July 2017 a received to-date official responses from: Bahamas, CRFM, Dominican Republic, France, Honduras, ICCAT, NAFO OSPESCA, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname and Venezuela. A number of members informed the secretariat that their comments and questions were integrated in the responses from CRFM and/or OSPESCA.
6. In order to proceed with the RFMO establishment process, the 1st Preparatory meeting will likely have to decide on whether the RFMO be established as international convention (Intergovernmental Organization) in itself, or under the FAO as an Agreement under article XIV of the FAO Constitution. The WECAFC Secretariat is trying to provide a clear and unbiased view on this matter and facilitates making available the necessary information in the above-mentioned discussion paper to the members and partners.
7. The WECAFC Secretariat continues to follow-up with the USA on the arrangements to host the 17th session of WECAFC in 2018. This ongoing process will largely depend on the scheduling of the 1st preparatory meeting and the start of the new WECAFC secretary in Barbados. It is however expected that both meetings (preparatory meeting and session) will be held in 2018.

ANNEX A: WORKPLAN OF THE ICM FOR 2018 (FROM THE 6TH MEETING)

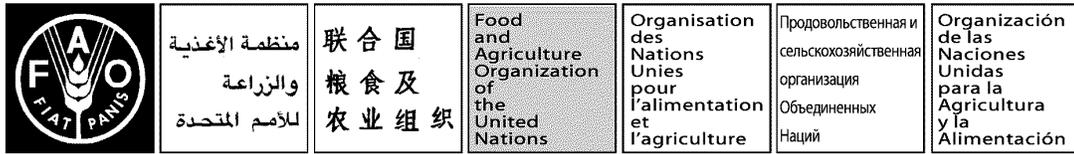
Priority Areas	Current status	Oct - Dec 2017	Jan -Mar 2018	Apr -Jun 2018	Jul - Sept 2018	Oct -Dec 2018
Queen Conch	1. Approved regional FMP including harmonized management and conservation measures in place at subregional and regional level (Approved by OSPESCA and CRFM Ministerial councils and WECAFC 16 session in June 2016)	Distribution of draft Queen Conch Management and conservation Plan to Fisheries Directors and other key stakeholders	Implementation by member states	Implementation by member states	Implementation by member states	Implementation by member states
	2. Project proposal to finance traceability work, national implementation of the FMP and 3rd meeting of the WG on Queen Conch submitted to CITES and the EU DG Mare (120 000 Euro)	Approval of project foreseen by DG Mare in December 2017; some funding required also from NOAA/CFMC	Drafting of the project agreement and operationalization of the project	Preparation of background info for the 3rd WG meeting	Organization of the 3rd WG meeting	

	3. Monitoring of implementation of the FMP, as well a development of NDFs and data provision, through letter of WECAFC chair	insertion of country responses on CITES Queen Conch NDF website and data in FAO's FishStatJ				
Priority Areas	Current status	Oct - Dec 2017	Jan -Mar 2018	Apr -Jun 2018	Jul - Sept 2018	Oct -Dec 2018
Lobster	1. OSPESCA Lobster regulation, CRFM St George Lobster declaration and WECAFC recommendation are endorsed, harmonize management measures and region-wide accepted		OSPESCA updating the FMP that it will have greater coverage, not only OSPESCA	OSPESCA updating the FMP that it will have greater coverage, not only OSPESCA	OSPESCA updating the FMP that it will have greater coverage, not only OSPESCA	OSPESCA updating the FMP that it will have greater coverage, not only OSPESCA
	2. ECOLangosta project supports policy cycle of lobster management	2nd JWG meeting on stock assessment on methodologies	3rd JWG meeting on traceability standard			
Flying Fish	1. Subregional Flying Fish management plan adopted by CRFM in 2015 and through a WECAFC recommendation in 2016	Review and revise the FFMP and implement various tools	review and revise the FFMP and implement various tools	review and revise the FFMP and implement various tools	review and revise the FFMP and implement various tools	
	5. CLME+ flying fish sub project supports policy cycle of flying fish management			possible JWG meeting		

Priority Areas	Current status	Oct - Dec 2017	Jan -Mar 2018	Apr -Jun 2018	Jul - Sept 2018	Oct -Dec 2018
Shrimp and Groundfish	1. shrimp fisheries control measures discussed at technical level and draft investment programme developed in 2015	Publication of draft FMP, Investment report and stock assessment info of 2015 as FAO circular in Spanish and English		Bycatch reduction strategy developed with support from REBYC II LAC project		
	2. CLME+ shrimp and groundfish sub project supports policy cycle of transboundary shrimp management	Launching workshop/2nd meeting of the WG on Shrimp and Groundfish on 20-24 November 2017		3rd meeting of the WG on shrimp and groundfish	Finalization of the shrimp FMP for endorsement	review and endorsement of shrimp FMP by CRFM (and OSPESCA)
	3. REBYC II LAC project ongoing -support to some WG countries	EAF in shrimp and groundfish fisheries management training in Costa Rica in last week of November (supported by REBYC II LAC)				
Sharks and Rays	1. WG on Sharks and Rays established	Organization of the 1st meeting of the WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA/CFMC/CITES WG on sharks and rays	Recommendations on sharks reviewed and endorsed by CRFM and OSPESCA			recommendations approved by WECAFC 17
	NOAA project facilitated the regional assessment and RPOA sharks' development	recommendations on sharks reviewed by SAG 8	Finalization of the RPOA sharks	RPOA sharks reviewed	RPOA sharks endorsed by CRFM and OSPESCA	RPOA-Sharks approved by WECAFC 17

Priority Areas	Current status	Oct - Dec 2017	Jan -Mar 2018	Apr -Jun 2018	Jul - Sept 2018	Oct -Dec 2018
RWG IUU	1. 1st and 2nd meeting of the RWG-IUU conducted in March and September 2017 (awareness raised and capacity developed)			3rd meeting of the RWG-IUU to discuss the RPOA-IUU		
	2. recommendations on vessel marking, a regional authorized vessel record and IUU vessel lists prepared	recommendations from RWG-IUU reviewed by SAG	Recommendations of RWG-IUU reviewed by CRFM and OSPESCA		Increase awareness in member countries on recommendations	recommendations approved by WECAFC 17
	3. elements for RPOA-IUU identified				draft RPOA-IUU reviewed by CRFM and OSPESCA	RPOA-IUU reviewed and endorsed by WECAFC 17
Spawning Aggregations	Meeting postponed due to Hurricane Maria		JWG meeting			
FADS Fisheries			NOAA funded FAD WG meeting foreseen			

Priority Areas	Current status	Oct - Dec 2017	Jan -Mar 2018	Apr -Jun 2018	Jul - Sept 2018	Oct -Dec 2018
RFMO establishment process	1. 16th session of WECAFC launched process to establish an RFMO	Discussion paper to address questions from members and partners following the 16th session prepared				
	2. GCP/SLC/015/EC "Support to the establishment of a regional fisheries management organization for the WECAFC area "approved and operational. 100 000 Euro available for the 1st Preparatory meeting		Preparation for the 1st preparatory meeting	Organization of the 1st preparatory meeting		Preparation for the 2nd preparatory meeting (with CLME+ funding)



ANNEX B: DRAFT CONTENTS OF THE DISCUSSION PAPER

The draft contents of the discussion paper are:

List of acronyms and abbreviations

Executive summary

Table of contents

1. Introduction – describing the decisions of WECAFC 16 that led to the request for a discussion paper
2. Background – short overview of the re-orientation process so far
3. Objectives – what will need to change in terms of objectives if WECAFC is transformed into an RFMO
4. Competency/regulatory area – different options (e.g. high seas only vs current coverage area)
5. Stocks coverage – different options (see WECAFC 16 report and opinions expressed by members before WECAFC 16)
6. National sovereignty aspects – options for hand over certain responsibilities to the RFMO – high seas stocks only, or straddling, transboundary shared (regional) fishery resources- and the implications
7. Membership – options to include or exclude DWFNs
8. Institutional structure – options as presented in paper of Helga
9. Decision making processes – describe processes used by WECAFC internally + current Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries (with OSPESCA and CRFM) and two other options, such as used by NEAFC and GFCM
10. Budgetary implications for Members – options for scale of contributions – see earlier papers prepared
11. Conclusions and Recommendations

References

Annexes

The TORs are cleared by FAO's legal office. A fisheries legal expert is contracted, cleared by the FAO Legal Office. The development of the paper is being financed from remaining funds under EU DG Mare funded Trust Fund project GCP/SLC/011/EC that supported also the WECAFC 16 session.