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## JOINT MEETING

**Hundred and Thirtieth Session of the Programme Committee and  
Hundred and Eighty-fifth Session of the Finance Committee**

**22 March 2021**

**Proposal for the establishment of the Sub-Committee on Fisheries  
Management**

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This document presents background information concerning the proposal on the establishment of a sub-committee on fisheries management, and summarizes the consultation process held in FAO and its current status, including Members' recommendations agreed in the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), in February 2021.

### GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE JOINT MEETING

- The Joint Meeting is invited to provide guidance, as deemed appropriate.

#### Draft Advice

#### **The Joint Meeting:**

- **took note of the consultation process carried out on the proposal to establish a sub-committee on fisheries management.**

## I. Background

1. During the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), a new sub-committee for fisheries was first raised under Agenda Item 4, *State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture*, when Norway proposed a sub-committee on fisheries management, which would include small-scale fisheries management. The Committee "*expressed strong interest in discussing the establishment of a sub-committee on fisheries management in order to assist the international community, especially developing States*".<sup>1</sup>
2. The issue was addressed in more detail under COFI 33 Agenda Item 14.2, *Any other matters*, when Norway explained the importance of establishing a new sub-committee on fisheries management, including that:
  - a) the current COFI process does not allow for the in-depth discussion on any particular topic, such as the Voluntary Guidelines for the Flag State Performance;
  - b) the new sub-committee on fisheries management would also allow COFI to address the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines) on a regular basis and to discuss matters of principle and cross-cutting themes, such as climate change and food security; and
  - c) the increased complexity of ocean governance and its supported strengthening reiterated by several Members.
3. Further, the Committee requested the Secretariat, in close cooperation with the Bureau, and mindful of the rules of procedure for establishing subsidiary bodies, to develop a proposal for the possible establishment of a sub-committee on fisheries management, to be submitted for the consideration of Members at the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of COFI. It underlined that the proposal should elaborate on all relevant aspects, including financial and administrative implications and terms of reference, identifying ways to achieve efficiencies and avoid duplications with other COFI sub-committees. And it noted that such sub-committee could include a standing agenda item on sustainable small-scale fisheries (SSF).<sup>2</sup>

## II. Consultation process

4. The Secretariat proposed to establish a Joint Task Force for Investigation of the Proposal to Establish a New Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management (JTF) with representatives of the Bureau of COFI 34:
  - a) to analyse relevant discussions during and after COFI 33;
  - b) to investigate potential options, including the establishment of a new sub-committee, addressing the issues behind the proposal in consideration, including the relationship with existing bodies, the relevant legal processes, and administrative and financial implications; and
  - c) to propose the best ways forward for further consideration by the Bureau of COFI 34.
5. The JTF was formed with representatives of the Bureau (Chile, New Zealand and Norway) and the Secretariat. Informal consultations of the JTF were organized in March 2019, June 2019, September 2019 and January 2021. A number of other Members participated in the meetings of the JTF as observers.

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 11 of the [Report of the Thirty-third Session of the Committee on Fisheries](#), Rome, 9-13 July 2018 (FIAP/R1249).

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 128 of the [Report of the Thirty-third Session of the Committee on Fisheries](#), Rome, 9-13 July 2018 (FIAP/R1249)

6. While there was no consensus on options proposed and discussed, the JTF agreed that:
  - a) COFI should focus more on strategic and policy issues to support its role as a leader in global technical fisheries issues, particularly about capture fisheries. It needs, therefore, to strengthen and improve its function as a policy decision-making body;
  - b) the work on the management of capture fisheries should be appropriately addressed at the technical level in order to allow COFI to focus more on strategic and policy issues;
  - c) the momentum to find a concrete solution to guarantee this better preparation should be maintained;
  - d) the re-arrangements of the current framework and the establishment of a possible new subcommittee could be advantageous in preparing COFI's work and technical discussion on capture fisheries;
  - e) no duplication of themes should exist between governing bodies, with the themes being addressed in the most appropriate one, considering the terms of reference and the agenda items of the existing sub-committees and COFI, aiming to improve efficiency in the handling of capture fisheries issues by the COFI;
  - f) the improvement of COFI's work concerning capture fisheries should also take into consideration ways to strengthen the relationship with Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), including no duplication of work at the regional level;
  - g) an evaluation mechanism, where the system is reviewed periodically (e.g., every five years) should be introduced if the new sub-committee is agreed; and
  - h) depending on the option chosen, a funding mechanism to facilitate developing countries' participation in technical discussions in the new sub-committee could be considered.

### **III. Current status**

7. In January 2021, at the last meeting of the JTF, it was agreed to terminate its work and continue addressing the proposal of a new sub-committee in an appropriate forum, including the possibility of informal consultations in a format of Friends of the Chair under the leadership of the new Chairperson of COFI.
8. COFI 34 agreed to continue the consultation process on the proposal to establish a new sub-committee on fisheries management in a transparent and inclusive way, under the leadership of the Chairperson of COFI.