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Organización
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para la
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Alimentación

REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES

Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Fisheries Management

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CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A FEASIBILITY STUDY TO REVIEW THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL DATABASE OF VIOLATIONS, ESTABLISH A LIST OF VESSELS AUTHORIZED TO FISH BY MEMBERS, AND PROMOTE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE (MCS) NETWORK

RATIONALE:¹

1. One of the greatest challenges faced by fisheries management and enforcement authorities in the region is the lack of access to region-wide information on fishing vessel identification, ownership and control. As stated in the proposal paper submitted to the Third Meeting of the Working Group on Fisheries Management held in Doha, Qatar, from 20-22 October 2009 (Appendix 1), that the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI, 'the Commission' hereafter), as regional fisheries body, has a strong role in regional fisheries management. In line with international agreements and initiatives with regard to IUU fishing the Commission could initiate the development of a regional database that keeps full record of all types of fishing violations by traditional vessels and other key information in relation to vessel operators, vessel characteristics, details of fishing operations, and catch compositions and amounts. This type of information could be shared among member states and could be used as a part of early alert system to reduce risk and improve efficiency of management measures.

¹ Paper prepared and submitted by the Ministry of Fisheries Wealth, Sultanate of Oman. Please note that these draft terms of reference are for comment. For consistency purpose the present draft follows closely the report on "Global Record Feasibility Study" by FAO in 2006.

2. Drawing from relevant case studies from other regions the proposed study should cover all issues relevant to the development of a regional database system. However, in particular the study should:

- Determine (by working closely with RECOFI and Members) the scope of the record, content and format of the proposed database system;
- Review comprehensively the current situations with regard to baseline information requirements, inventory of key information sources, national MCS scheme, current national policies and practices with regard to MCS, national capacity (human, financial and technology related) in meeting the needs, policies on access to information and the existing networking environment (if any), including all Member countries in the region;
- Provide complete appraisal of important factors such as, technology and system requirements including their functionality, information requirements, economic , legal and operational feasibility, and highlight any key elements that should be paid attention to create an effective MCS system;
- Recommend guidelines and a framework for a set of minimum requirements for the system with regard to data format, data types, data provision protocol and governance approach;
- Recommend different options for the preparation of and access to a regional records of fishing violations as a part of regional knowledge management mechanism and that such options should be supported by associated cost estimates for implementation and long-term maintenance;
- Recommend practical and justified actions to any obstacles that could considered to improve decision making and enhance information exchange among member countries for combating IUU fishing; and
- Determine essential requirements to ensure appropriate linkages to other relevant databases and networking initiatives.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE WORKING GROUP

3. The Working Group is invited to review this proposal, in the light of discussions at the third meeting of the WGF, and to consider the terms of reference proposed for a feasibility study to review the development of a regional database of violations, establish a list of vessels authorized to fish by Members and promote the establishment of a regional MCS network.

Appendix 1**PROPOSAL BY THE SULTANATE OF OMAN IN RELATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RECOFI RECORD OF IUU FISHING VIOLATIONS****INTRODUCTION**

1. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is one of considerable concerns of global community. It undermines the rational and legitimate objectives of fisheries management as it imposes serious threats to the sustainable utilization of fisheries resources and the socio-economic welfare of coastal fishing communities. Within the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) a coastal State has sovereign rights to the fisheries resources and it is responsible for the conservation and management of fisheries resources. However, to ensure effective management of shared resources and effective control of IUU fishing activities within EEZs including incursions by foreign vessels in to EEZs, a cooperative approach is essential.

RATIONALE FOR THE RECORD OF VIOLATIONS

2. The Regional Commission on Fisheries (RECOFI, “the Commission” hereafter), as a regional fisheries body, has a strong role in regional fisheries management. In line with international agreements and initiatives with regard to IUU fishing the Commission could initiate the development of a regional database that keeps full record of all types of fishing violations by traditional vessels and other key information in relation to vessel operators, vessel characteristics, details of fishing operations, and catch compositions and amounts. This type of information could be shared among Member States and could be used as a part of early alert system to reduce risk and improve efficiency of management measures.

HOW THE RECORD WOULD BE OPERATED AND MANAGED

3. We would like to propose that the Commission would be responsible for the overall management of the recommended database with the help of Member States. In this context, the Commission should, amongst others:

- request each Member State to provide necessary information on traditional fishing vessels fishing in its water;
- negotiate regulatory arrangements with the Member States in relation to the effective implementation of vessel monitoring systems (VMS) as appropriate;
- strengthen provisions for sharing information among Member States;
- develop mechanisms to improve monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures and establish a regional MCS network; and
- adopt appropriate trade related measures and promote exchange of fishery specific management related information among Member States to improve traceability of all fishery products traded with the regional countries.

BENEFITS OF THE RECORD TO RECOFI MEMBERS

4. A cooperative and regional approach would enhance resource and technical capacity to address IUU fishing in a cost-effective and efficient manner. This will also establish transparency in effective decision-making regarding IUU fishing in the region and ensure sustainability of shared fisheries resources.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE WORKING GROUP

5. The Working Group is invited to:

- review the proposal along with the actions stated above and provide recommendations to the Commission for appropriate actions, measures and procedures to combat IUU fishing in the region; and
- provide guidance for the effective implementation of decisions and measures regarding IUU fishing.