

# Report of the National Workshop on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries



BAY OF BENGAL PROGRAMME

BOBP/REP/90

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REPORT OF THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE CODE OF CONDUCT  
FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES

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29- 30 September, 2000  
Chennai, India

Edited by Yugraj Singh Yadava



BAY OF BENGAL PROGRAMME  
Chennai, India  
2001

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## ABSTRACT

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The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries is one of the most important international instruments devised for wholesale management of the living aquatic resources of our planet. The Code is an outcome of several contemporary global initiatives, which expressed concern about the over-exploitation of important fish stocks, damage to the ecosystems, economic losses, and issues affecting the fish trade.

As a first step toward promoting implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries in India, a National Workshop for coastal States and Union Territories was organized by the Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) in association with the Government of India at Chennai during 29-30 September 2000. The objectives of the Workshop were to fully familiarise government functionaries with the elements of the Code and the technical guidelines that have been prepared by FAO to assist member-countries in implementing the Code.

The National Workshop brought together senior fisheries administrators working with the Union Ministry of Agriculture and the State and Union Territory Governments, scientists and experts from fisheries institutions, and representatives from national and international NGOs. The Workshop, saw an enthusiastic participation by 43 delegates and incidentally, it was the first occasion when senior fisheries administrators from the Union and the coastal States and Union Territories had assembled to discuss the Code and arrive at an implementable plan of action. For many of the participants, the Workshop also marked the first systematic exposure to the Code of Conduct.

The two-day Workshop highlighted several problems concerning implementation of the Code in a large country like India. Keeping in view the strengths and weaknesses of national and state governments, the vastness of the country and the diverse and highly complex demographic and socio-political fabric, the planners and experts concluded that massive efforts would be needed to take the Code to the grassroots level quickly in India. The report contains the Plan of Action and the papers presented at the Workshop by the experts and senior officers representing the coastal States and the Union Territories.

## **PREFACE**

This document contains the report of a “National Workshop on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries”. The Workshop was held in Chennai, India, between September 29 and 30, 2000 and was organized by FAO’s Bay of Bengal Programme in association with the Government of India.

This report contains the papers presented by the experts at the Workshop including the keynote address and the presentations by various coastal States and Union Territories of India.

The Bay of Bengal Programme is a multi-agency regional fisheries programme which covers seven countries around the Bay of Bengal – Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The BOBP plays a catalytic and consultative role in developing coastal fisheries management in the Bay of Bengal to help improve the conditions of small-scale fisherfolk in member countries.

The BOBP is sponsored by the Governments of Denmark and Japan. The executing agency is the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

## FOREWORD

The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, which was adopted on October 31, 1995, is five years old now. This landmark international instrument, devised for the management of the world's aquatic resources, is global and is directed at everyone engaged in the conservation, management and development of fisheries. The Code, which is voluntary and standard-setting one, is aimed at establishing principles and standards of behaviour for responsible fishing and fisheries practice after taking into account relevant biological, technological, economic, social, environmental and commercial aspects.

The contribution of fisheries to the countries in the Bay of Bengal region is substantial. Any decline in fisheries would severely impact the food security and national economy of the BOB countries. While governments in the region have recognized the need for better fisheries management and adoption of the Code, action has been lacking. Ignorance and lack of understanding are largely responsible. The constraints include not merely a lack of resources and technical expertise, but also the will and the determination to implement the Code.

The BOBP is proud to have held this Workshop, which was aimed at assessing the progress of the implementation of the Code in the coastal States and Union Territories of India and evolving an acceptable and implementable plan of action. For most of the participants, the Workshop marked the first systematic exposure to the Code of Conduct and it has been successful in meeting its objectives.

This Report is a compendium of the presentations made by the participants in the Workshop and also includes current national statistics on important aspects of fisheries and aquaculture.

BOBP, as a catalyst and facilitator, has been instrumental in sensitizing Governments across the Bay on the needs of adopting appropriate policy measures from time to time. We hope that dissemination of this Report will help in further sensitizing the stakeholders and generating awareness of the increasing responsibility that we all face in improving responsible practices and promoting sustainability in fisheries.

**Chennai**

**Yugraj Singh Yadava**  
*Interim IGO coordinator*  
*Bay of Bengal Programme*

## CONTENTS

Workshop Prospectus	
Agenda	3
List of Participants	5
Workshop Summary	11
Plan of Action	14
Message - <b>RB Singh</b>	16
Key-Note <b>Address—NKSinha</b>	17
Background and Purpose of the National Workshop – <b>MKR Nair</b>	22
Nature, Scope and Objectives of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries – <b>YS Yadava</b>	24
Responsible Fisheries: can it be achieved with a Code of Conduct for Fisheries? – <b>John Kurien</b>	27
Overview of Marine Fish Stocks and their Management in India – <b>VSSomvanshi</b>	35
Fisheries Research to Support Management of India's Fisheries: Past, Present & Future – <b>K Gopakumar</b>	45
Seafood Quality Assurance and Eco- Labelling – <b>KJose Cyriac</b>	52
Applying the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to the Management and Development of Marine Small-scale Fisheries in India – <b>Sebastian Mathew</b>	59
Operationalising the Code - <b>Kee-Chai CHONG</b>	73
Presentations of States & Union Territories	
Gujarat	77
Maharashtra	89
Karnataka	93
Goa	97
Lakshadweep	101
Kerala	106
TamilNadu	112
Pondicherry	117
Andhra Pradesh	121
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	124
Orissa	132
West Bengal	136
Fisheries Statistics	140

## WORKSHOP PROSPECTUS

### Background

Awareness of the generally poor state of many of the world's major fisheries, ineffective conservation and management practices, and the need to ensure long-term sustainable development in the fisheries sector led to the adoption of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (Code) by the FAO Conference in October 1995.

Although voluntary in nature, the FAO Conference called upon all countries and those involved in fisheries to collaborate in the fulfillment and implementation of the objectives and principles of the Code. India has accepted and agreed to implement the Code.

The resolution of the FAO Conference laid the basis for FAO to promote further and assist in the implementation of the Code. To this extent the Government of India with the support of the BOBP has proposed to organise a national Workshop for participants from both East and West Coastal States and Union Territories, to elicit and facilitate the structural changes required to improve the conservation, management, sustainable development and productive utilization of the marine fisheries resources.

### Structure of the Code

The Code of Conduct consists of twelve Articles and two annexes. The last seven Articles lay down the general principles and address six substantive technical areas, including.

- fisheries management
- fishing operations
- aquaculture development
- integration of fisheries into coastal area management post-harvest practices and trade and
- fisheries research

### The Rationale for the Adaptation of the Code

In order to reflect the particular needs and situations of different regions and fisheries, adaptation of the Code may be desirable, to foster greater national implementation of the Code and should therefore be encouraged as far as it is consistent with the objectives and principles of the Code.

Popular participation in adapting the Code to suit national conditions may lead to enhanced acceptance of the Code, because stakeholders are more likely to regard a locally adapted Code as being *home grown* and somewhat their *own*.

A useful starting point to commence the process of national adaptation of the Code is to have a national Workshop. This Workshop is being organised by the BOBP with the support of the Government of India in order to identify national/ state priorities, areas of particular relevance, limitations, constraints and approaches to be adopted for implementation of the Code.

Coastal States and Union Territories adaptation of the Code is *inter alia* likely to yield the following benefits:

- Facilitate national implementation of the Code in which States and Union Territories with similar resources and problems can identify them and look together for solutions,
- A sense of direct participation in the Code process will be fostered, thus facilitating a greater commitment to local and national implementation,
- Identification of specific problems and priorities, including those relating to different fisheries, gear and management practices as well as to fishery enhancement techniques and aquaculture development,

- Identification of additional areas which are not specifically or sufficiently covered in the Code but which are important for the nation,
- Identification of major *local* constraints to the implementation of the Code and of approaches needed to address those constraints and
- Elaboration of and agreement on strategies and technical guidelines to assist with the implementation of the Code at the national level.

### **Objectives and Purpose of the Workshop**

The objective of the National Workshop is to facilitate a greater understanding of the Code among all those concerned with fisheries in the coastal States! Union Territories of India and to foster steps towards the more effective implementation of the Code in the country.

### **Funding**

The Workshop will be funded by the BOBP.

### **Structure of the Workshop**

An Agenda for the Workshop is attached. The emphasis of the Workshop will be on providing essential information concerning the contents and implementation of the Code, review some of the substantive articles of the Code in the light of fisheries needs and requirements in the country, and chalk out a strategy for its implementation.

### **Location and dates**

The Workshop will be held in Chennai during 29-30th September 2000 at Hotel Shelter 19, 20 & 21, Venkatesa Agraharam Street, Mylapore, Chennai, 600 004.

### **Participation**

Senior Level Fisheries Personnel from the Government of India and coastal States and Union Territory Departments of Fisheries will be invited to participate in the Workshop.

Eminent Fisheries Scientists and Experts will participate in the Workshop as resource persons to facilitate discussion and to provide technical advice as required.

### **Language**

The Workshop will be conducted in English.

### **Administrative Arrangements**

Administrative arrangements for the Workshop will be handled by the Coordinator, BOBP. Enquiries concerning administrative arrangements should be addressed to the Coordinator, BOBP.

### **Report and Output of the Workshop**

The report of the Workshop will be published in English. It will outline a strategy for implementation of the Code India. The BOBP will coordinate the production of the Workshop report.

### **Workshop Team Coordinator and Further Information**

The Coordinator of the Workshop will be **Dr Y S Yadava**. Further information concerning the Workshop should be addressed as follows:

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## AGENDA

29.9.2000

**0830-0900**      **Registration of Participants**

0900-0910      Welcome Address      Mr M V Chunkath  
Secretary  
Fisheries and Livestock  
Government of Tamil Nadu

0910-0920      Background and Purpose of the Workshop      Mr M K R Nair  
Fisheries Development  
Commissioner  
Government of India

0920-0930      Nature, Scope and Objectives of the Code      Dr Y S Yadava  
Coordinator, BOBP

0930-0940      Introductory Remarks      Mr Peter Rosenegger  
FAO Representative in India &  
Bhutan

0940-1000      Key Note Address &      Mr N K Sinha  
Inauguration of the Workshop      Secretary  
Deptt of Animal Husbandry  
& Dairying, Government of India

**1000- 1030**      **Coffee Break**

1030-1130      'Responsible Fisheries: Can it be      Dr John Kurien  
achieved with a Code of Conduct?'

1130-1230      Overview of Marine Fish Stocks, and      Dr V S Somvanshi  
their Management in India      Director General, FSI  
Mumbai

**1230-1330**      **Lunch**

1330-1530      **Presentation by Coastal States/ Union Territories**  
Gujarat  
Maharashtra  
Goa  
Karnataka  
Lakshadweep  
Kerala  
Tamil Nadu  
Podicherry  
A&N Island  
Andhra Pradesh  
Orissa  
West Bengal

<b>1530-1600</b>	<b><i>Coffee Break</i></b>	
1600-1700	Fisheries Research to Support Management of India's Fisheries: Past, Present and Future	Dr K Gopakumar Deputy Director General ICAR, New Delhi
30.9.2000		
0900-1000	Seafood Quality Assurance and Eco-Labeling	Mr Jose Cyriac Chairman, MPEDA, Cochin
1000-1100	The Code and its Adaptation for Development of Small – Marine Fisheries in India	Mr. Sebastian Mathew Coordinator, ICSF, Chennai
<b>1100-1130</b>	<b><i>Coffee Break</i></b>	
1130-1230	Role of FAO in Facilitating the Operationalisation and Implementation of the Code	Dr Kee-Chai CHONG
<b>1230-1330</b>	<b><i>Lunch Break</i></b>	
<b>1330-1530</b>	<b><i>Panel Discussion</i></b>	
	Mr N K Sinha, Chairman Mr Peter Rosenegger Mr Jose Cyriac Mr M K R Nair Dr Kee-Chai CHONG Dr V S Somvanshi Dr G R M Rao Dr V Sampath Dr M Sakthivel Dr John Kurien Mr Sebastian Mathew Mr G D Chandrapal Dr Y S Yadava	
<b>1530-1600</b>	<b><i>Coffee Break</i></b>	
<b>1600-1730</b>	<b><i>Concluding Session</i></b>	
	Recommendations Vote of Thanks	Mr S R Madhu Information Consultant, BOBP

## **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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## **WORKSHOP SUMMARY**

**SRMadhu\***

(Based on an article in the Bay of Bengal News, Vol.11 No. 18, September 2000)

“It’s in the same category as motherhood and patriotism,” said one delegate before the National Workshop started. “Everyone professes strong support. But when it comes to concrete action, it’s limited, few even attempt it.”

The delegate was talking about the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and the occasion was a National Workshop **on the subject, hosted by BOBP** in Chennai from 29 to 30 September, 2000. As many as 43 delegates from the Union and State Governments, various fisheries institutions, NGOs, FAO and BOBP attended the Workshop. Incidentally, it was also the first occasion when the senior-most fisheries administrators from the Union and the coastal States and Union Territories had assembled to discuss the Code and arrive at an implementable plan of action.

For many of them, the Workshop marked the first systematic exposure to the Code of Conduct. “Five years after the Code came into being, there’s a Workshop on the subject. It’s late, but better late than never,” said John Kurien, fisheries activist and Associate Professor at the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum.

This summary is a round up of what happened at the Workshop. The full papers are presented in the succeeding chapters.

Mr Mohan Verghese Chankath, Tamil Nadu’s Secretary for Fisheries and Livestock, made a terse and well-worded welcome address. He said that thanks to BOBP, Tamil Nadu had taken early action on the Code by translating it into Tamil and distributing it to fishermen’s co-operative societies and other user groups. He expressed Tamil Nadu’s delight and enthusiasm at the prospect of BOBP merging as an Inter-Governmental Organisation (IGO).

Mr M K R Nair, Fisheries Development Commissioner to the Government of India, warned of “death clouds” hovering above the seas if practices like overfishing, illegal fishing and dumping of wastes into the sea weren’t curbed. The Code was timely and should be taken seriously by one and all. He said the key factor today is to ensure sustainability and make all the stakeholders active partners in adopting the tenets of responsible fisheries.

Dr Y S Yadava, Interim IGO Co-ordinator, briefly described the nature, scope and objectives of the Code. He also highlighted the activities undertaken during the three phases of the BOBP and the Programme’s achievements during the last 20 years.

FAO Representative in India and Bhutan Mr Peter Rosenegger berated mankind for its thoughtlessness. “We try to outsmart nature, pollute the air, do everything we shouldn’t do,” he said. There were two reasons why such behaviour was obnoxious, “Our life span is at most 100 years, Nature goes on for hundreds of thousands of years. We have no right to make the world unlivable for our children and grandchildren. Second, in nature, when one person commits a crime, it’s others who suffer.” Mr Rosenegger read out a message to the Workshop sent by Dr R B Singh, FAO Assistant Director-General, from the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok.

Mr N K Sinha, Secretary in the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India inaugurated the Workshop and delivered a thoughtful keynote address. He pointed out

- Information Consultant, Bay of Bengal Programme. 9/ Saint Mary’s Road, Abhiramapuram, Chennai 600 018, Tamil, India

that while demand for fish is growing, production is falling, on account of factors that cry out for a Code of Conduct. He traced the Code's **origin** and described its features. Since the Code is elaborate and complex, it needs to be simplified. It must be translated into local languages, workshops must be held, especially at the grassroots level, to explain the Code's provisions.

Mr Sinha cited some decisions taken by the Government of India recently to implement the Code. Efforts were being made to optimise the fishing fleet size. A move to impose a uniform ban on fishing during monsoon months had been initiated. An expert group had been set up to prepare a comprehensive policy for marine fisheries. A Working Group of experts had been constituted to reassess the 1991 estimates of the potential yield of marine fishery resources. The Ninth Five-Year Plan for the fisheries sector had focused on an integrated approach to sustainable development but management had received inadequate attention. He suggested that adequate funds be earmarked for fisheries management activities in India's Tenth Five-Year Plan

Complimenting the BOBP on its performance and its initiative in organising the Workshop, Mr Sinha said "the fullest and most effective implementation of the Code can only be through a viable partnership between the government, industry and society." He suggested that BOBP in its future role as an IGO should help the member-countries implement the Code.

After a coffee session, delegates reassembled to hear Dr. John Kurien talk about responsible fisheries and pose them the question: "Can it be achieved with a Code of Conduct?" He said that the movement of India away **from** responsible fisheries began with the neglect of the wealth of knowledge and technology that **numerous** traditional small-scale fishing communities possessed. The dominance of the state **in** setting the research agenda, choosing the technology and setting the administrative framework aggravated the problem. It curbed the initiative of the most important fisheries player, the fish worker.

Dr Kurien laid down a set of pre-conditions for responsible fisheries.

Dr V S Somvanshi of the Fishery Survey of India, Mumbai presented a useful and informative overview of marine fish stocks and their management in India. He said that annual marine fish production in India was **about** 2.7 million tonnes. while the maximum sustainable yield of fish stocks in the EEZ was estimated at 3.9 million **tonnes**. He suggested investigations **into** fish stocks and stressed the need for management regimes for various fisheries: Some recommendations: Legislation for coastal fishing craft and deep sea vessels should be compatible. Colour codes should be specified for every category of fishing craft and every fishing zone. Names of the craft and their registration numbers should be in large standard size to facilitate easy identification.

A long session of presentations by various coastal States and Union Territories followed. Representatives **from** (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal provided information and insights about their fisheries and their development and management problems. Most of them sought assistance from FAO and the Central Government.

Dr K Gopakumar, Deputy Director-General (Fisheries) in the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, described the role of fisheries research in supporting fisheries management. For example, **in** marine fisheries, R & D organizations had developed fishing vessel designs, standardised quality control of marine products for exports and organised fish inspection. They had undertaken research in mariculture, pearl culture, the setting up of shrimp hatcheries, the utilization of fishing wastes, the application of electronic equipment in fishing. He suggested the creation of a Ministry of Fisheries. Fisheries science should be declared a technical subject like engineering. A standard course and degree syllabus should be set up at the national level.

The State presentations concluded in the morning of the second day of the Workshop. Then followed a lively talk by Mr K Jose Cyriac, Chairman of the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) on seafood quality assurance and labelling. Talking about international quality standards for fish and fish products, he outlined the role of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the ISO 9000 series standards, the

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point system. He also explained the role of eco-labelling and its role in promoting sustainably managed fisheries. He described MPEDA's work in promoting seafood quality.

Replying to questions, Mr Cyriac said that the Union Government could fund half the cost of turtle exclusion devices to be fitted on to trawlers for conservation of endangered marine turtle species. There were no national guidelines yet on eco-labelling, but it was a matter of time before they were formulated. He described as exaggerated the problems of women in fish processing units. More than 30,000 women from Kerala earned more than Rs 1200\* per month in fish processing units. Isolated and anecdotal issues had been blown up.

Mr Sebastian Mathew of the International Collective in Support of Fish Workers, Chennai made an enlightening presentation on the application of the Code of Conduct to small-scale fisheries. He pleaded for compatible legislative regimes on conservation and management at the national and state levels. He emphasised that it was essential to create a feeling of "ownership" of the Code among all players in fisheries. Only then would they take an active part in promoting the Code. Another important and urgent need was to address the numerous information gaps in fisheries. Better data collection tools were needed.

Dr Kee-Chai CHONG, SEAFDEC Consultant, presented and discussed a checklist of guidelines on operationalising the Code. He emphasised on the need for guidelines based on the Code that met individual country requirements. The guidelines should be practical, specific and legitimate in the eyes of the stakeholders.

The post-lunch session of the second day was devoted to a panel discussion of key points and issues that had emerged from the Workshop. It was chaired by Mr N K Sinha. The session led to a Plan of Action. Sample points: The Code should be simplified, condensed and translated into vernacular languages, it should be popularized through street plays and comic books, fishing capacity should be maintained at optimum levels, there should be a uniform ban on fishing during monsoon months.

The BOBP distributed a set of posters to every participant and a video film showing how a street play was used to popularise the Code in fishing villages around Chennai.

What did the National Workshop achieve? Better understanding. Vigorous interaction. Many new ideas and insights. Some useful recommendations. Most importantly, the Code of Conduct is now much more than a noble concept akin to motherhood and patriotism, it is a practical goal toward which all players in fisheries can constantly move.

US\$ = 46.50 Indian Rupees

## **PLAN OF ACTION**

- The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code) should be translated into vernacular languages. A simplified and concise version of the Code should be provided to the States/Union Territories on a priority basis for translation into vernacular languages.
- The Code should be popularised through street plays, comic books, audio-visual presentations, etc. The electronic media should be considered for the speedy dissemination of the Code.
- The coastal States and Union Territories should organise workshops/meetings with various user groups for better understanding of the provisions of the Code and its implementation.
- The fishing capacity should be kept at optimum levels, commensurate with sustainability. The practice of multi-agency registration of fishing vessels, prevalent in some States, should also be reconsidered.
- The coastal States and Union Territories should consider formulating a clearer definition of access rights to the territorial waters and harmonise their zonation policy for different categories of fishing vessels.
- There should be a uniform ban on fishing during monsoon months.
- Resource enhancement programmes, such as setting up of artificial reefs and ranching with restricted access, should be undertaken, especially for species under threat or subjected to over-exploitation.
- Every coastal State and Union Territory should consider setting up a Resource Management Wing in the Department of Fisheries
- The coastal States and Union Territories should consider setting up Awareness Centres to popularise the Code and other activities concerning fisheries development, conservation and management.
- The Government of India (the Centre) and the States/ Union Territories should consider laying more emphasis on post-harvest requirements of the fisheries sector, including quality control of fish and fish products for both domestic and export markets.
- The research institutions under the Ministry of Agriculture and the State Agricultural Universities should aim at providing adequate research support to the implementation of the Code.
- The Centre and the States should endeavour to set up a sound information data base to meet the implementation requirements of the Code.
- The States and Union Territories should be provided with special assistance for implementation of the provisions of the Code.
- The Centre and the States should consider laying more emphasis on fisheries development, conservation and management aspects in the future Five Year Plans.
- The *subsidiarity principle*, which takes management to the lowest meaningful level to enhance participation, should be encouraged.
- The Centre should consider introducing model bill(s)/legislation with the active participation of all stakeholder representatives for implementing those provisions of the Code, which are presently not covered by legislation.
- The Centre and the States/ Union Territories should consider instituting reforms in the existing legislation on fisheries to meet the requirements of the Code.

- The Centre should consider bringing all fisheries matters, now divided among various Ministries and Departments under one administrative umbrella.
- To check poaching/illegal fishing in the Bay of Bengal, FAO/BOBP may consider setting up a mechanism to enable the Bay of Bengal countries to interact regularly.
- A regional mechanism for study tours should be encouraged among countries around the Bay of Bengal to learn from one another's experiences in implementing the Code.

**MESSAGE FROM DR R B SINGH, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL,  
FAO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, BANGKOK**

I'm very happy that the Bay of Bengal Programme is organizing a National Workshop on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries has been correctly described as one of the most important international instruments devised for management of our planet's aquatic resources. It is global and all-encompassing in scope, directed at everyone concerned with the conservation of fishery resources and the management and development of fisheries.

The Code sets out principles and standards of behaviour for responsible practices in fisheries.. It covers not merely the capture of fish and fishing operations, hut the processing and trade of fish and fishery products, aquaculture, fisheries research, and integration of fisheries into coastal area management.

The FAO is happy to have brought the Code into existence in 1995. But its purpose can be served only when the Code is understood by all and given effect to by all – governments, international organizations, corporate firms, NGOs, officials, fishers and fishery-related individuals.

A special effort must be made to ensure that officials dealing with fisheries in the government are aware of the content, meaning and implications of the Code. Their ideas, inputs and advice are needed to propagate the Code. The present Workshop is therefore an essential and a very useful exercise.

The Code reflects the spirit, substance and effort of a number of FAO and United Nations initiatives, conventions and conferences. In organising this Workshop, the Bay of Bengal Programme not merely promotes the Code of Conduct, hut furthers awareness and action on all these important global initiatives. Wider application of the provisions of the Code will promote sustainable and responsible fisheries and thereby help in achieving the goals of national and global food security.

I wish the Workshop and its organisers and all its delegates two days of constructive discussion and a lifetime of useful follow-up!

## KEY-NOTE ADDRESS

N K Sinha\*

Justice G Ramanujam, Chairman Aquaculture Authority, Shri Mohan Verghese Chankath, Secretary, Fisheries & Animal Husbandry, Government of Tamil Nadu, Secretaries and Commissioners of Fisheries from the coastal States and Union Territories, distinguished experts and resource persons, Dr Yadava, IGO Coordinator, Bay of Bengal Programme, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege to be invited here by the Bay of Bengal Programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations as the Keynote Speaker for the National Workshop on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.



This Workshop is being organised at the most opportune time. Fisheries is facing a crisis all round the world and India is no exception. On one hand there is a growing demand for fish and fish products due to many reasons, on the other hand the fishers are having difficulty in meeting the demand because of depleting catches despite increasing efforts.

Over decades, maritime nations have pumped billions of dollars into expanding fishing fleets, subsidising everything from fuel costs to the construction of factory vessels. The open access nature of the fishery in a large part of the world, including India, has allowed unregulated entry. All these have led to extra fishing pressure, reducing fish stocks in many parts of the world to levels much below their sustainable yield.

Overfishing isn't man's only destructive act against nature. We have been continuously adding billions of tonnes of toxic substances into the sea. Habitat damage, industrial pollution, non-degradable effluents and wastes— all these have taken a heavy toll. About 97% of earth's living space is ocean. In other words, the sea is man's life-support system. But man's actions are fast destroying his own life-support system.

If we look at the world fin and shell fish production, there is a steady increase in production from 67 million tonnes (mt) in 1970 to 103.5 mt in 1990. The latest statistics for 1997 reveals that the world production from both capture and aquaculture reached the peak of 131 mt. During the period 1990 to 1997, a growth rate of 7.4% per year was achieved. However, the increase of about 27mt during this period was largely due to aquaculture and capture fisheries showed undisputable signs of plateauing. This has been true for both inland and marine capture fisheries.

In India the trend is no different. The total fish production increased from 1.76 mt in 1970-71 to 3.84 mt in 1990-91 and to 5.26 mt in 1998-99. During the period 1990-91 to 1998-99, an average growth rate of little over 4.0% was achieved. In the marine sector the production increased from 1.09 mt in 1970-71 to 2.3 mt in 1990-91 and reached a peak of 2.97 mt in 1996-97. Thereafter, it came down to 2.95 mt in 1997-98 and 2.7 mt in 1998-99. During the period 1990-91 to 1998-99, an average annual growth rate of 1.93% was recorded in the marine sector.

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Keeping in mind the annual marine harvestable potential of 3.9 mt, about  $\frac{3}{4}$ th of the potential is being harvested, leaving a balance of about  $\frac{1}{4}$ th. Since the present effort is largely restricted to the near-shore waters, it may be correct to say that further increments in marine fish production can only be achieved from the deep sea. As most coastal resources are being fished to their maximum sustainable limits, and optimisation of catches from deep sea still being a distant reality, we need to concentrate our efforts on the coastal resources and ensure that their sustainability is maintained.

The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries or simply the Code, as it is popularly known, defines in the General principles that “The right to fish carries with it the obligation to do so in a responsible manner.” It sets out principles and standards of behaviour for such practices and aims at effective conservation, management and development of living aquatic resources. The Code covers not merely capture of fish and fishing operations, but the processing and trade of fish and fishery products, aquaculture, fisheries research, and the integration of fisheries into coastal area management.

The Code is global in scope. It is directed toward members and non-members of FAO, fishing entities, organizations of all kinds, fishers, people engaged in the processing and marketing of fish and fishery products - in short everyone concerned with conservation of fishery resources and management and development of fisheries.

The Code is an outcome of several contemporary global initiatives, wherein concern was expressed about the over-exploitation of important stocks, damage to ecosystems, economic losses, and issues affecting the fish trade. All these threatened the sustainability of fisheries. The 19th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, held in March 1991, recommended that FAO should develop the concept of responsible fisheries and elaborate a Code of Conduct toward this end.

Subsequently the Government of Mexico, in collaboration with the FAO, convened a Conference on Responsible Fishing in Cancun in 1992. A declaration was passed at this Conference which developed the concept of responsible fisheries. The Cancun declaration was subsequently critically assessed, strengthened, refined, elaborated and fine-tuned at a number of conferences by various groups, and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries finally came into being on 31 October 1995 at the 28th session of the FAO Conference in Rome.

The Code reflects and includes major articles and provisions from a number of global UN conventions and agreements such as:

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, of 10 December 1982

- The 1992 Declaration of Cancun
- The 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development
- Agenda 21 adopted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development, in particular Chapter 17 of Agenda 21.

The Code contains 12 articles plus two annexes. The resolution as contained in Annex 2 of the Code calls on everyone concerned with fisheries to collaborate in implementation of the Code; urges that the special requirements of developing countries be taken into account in implementing the Code; requests the FAO to advise developing countries in this respect: calls upon the FAO to monitor and report on the implementation of the Code; urges the FAO to strengthen Regional Fisheries Bodies to deal more effectively with fisheries conservation and management issues.

The Code calls on all members and non-members of FAO and everyone concerned with the conservation, management and utilization of fisheries resources to collaborate in implementing the Code's objectives and principles. It says that FAO will monitor the application and implementation of the Code, It calls upon all States and Organizations, government or non-government, to co-operate actively with the FAO in this work. The Code also notes the special needs of developing countries and urges financial and technical assistance, technology transfer, training and scientific co-operation to address these needs. The ability of developing countries to develop their own fisheries should be enhanced. Their access to high-seas fisheries should be improved.

On fisheries management the Code urges conservation and management measures based on the best scientific evidence available. Coastal states should co-operate in the management of transboundary, straddling or highly migratory fish stocks. Mechanisms should be set up for fishing monitoring, surveillance, control and enforcement. Excess fishing capacity should be prevented: fishing effort should be commensurate with sustainability. The precautionary approach should be a guiding principle for fishery management: the absence of scientific information should not be reason for inaction on conservation and management measures. States should regulate fishing in such a way as to avoid the risk of conflict among fishers. States should take measures to minimize waste, discards, catch by lost or abandoned gear, catch of non-target species. The Code also suggests integration of fisheries into coastal area management. It urges an institutional framework, policy measures and regional co-operation to facilitate sustainable use of coastal resources.

The Code has extensively dealt with post-harvest practices and trade. It upholds the right of consumers to safe, wholesome and unadulterated fish and fishery products. Minimum standards should be set up for quality assurance and international trade in fish and fishery products should not compromise the sustainable development of fisheries and the responsible utilization of living aquatic resources. The Code urges States to liberalize trade in fish and fishery products and eliminate barriers to trade such as duties, quotas and non-tariff barriers. Laws and procedures applicable to international trade in fish and fishery products should be transparent, simple, comprehensible, and where possible based on scientific evidence,

The Code is one of the most important international instruments devised for wholesale management of the living aquatic resources of our planet. The effort that has gone into the Code is perhaps its main strength. It is all-inclusive and all-encompassing. It belongs to all of humanity. It is an indispensable source of reference on good conduct in fisheries.

The main weakness of the Code springs partly from its strength. The Code is elaborate and complex. Its language is dry and legal. It doesn't make for easy reading or comprehension.

To be meaningful, the Code must be not merely understood by all but implemented by all. The Code has to be translated into local languages. It needs to be simplified for various groups, particularly fishermen. Workshops and consultations are necessary, particularly at the grassroots level, to explain and discuss the provisions of the Code. The present National Workshop is one step in this direction,

As regards implementation of the Code, let me share with you that the Government of India has taken some landmark decisions in the recent past to implement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. To oversee implementation of the Code and other issues related with it, a National Level Committee has been set up under my chairmanship in the Ministry of Agriculture.

As we all are aware, the marine fisheries, more so the coastal fisheries in India has largely been an open-access fishery. Consequently no catch limits have been set on effort or the catch. To optimise the fishing fleet size, a National-Level Review Committee was constituted to study the size of the present marine fishing fleet in India *vis-a-vis* the harvestable, potential and give recommendations on the effort that need to be deployed. The Committee has concluded, after discussion with experts and with coastal States, that the mechanized fishing fleet, in the size range of 8 - 15 m OAL, has attained optimum strength. But 700 new-generation resource-specific vessels, about 18m OAL, including trawlers and gillnetters-cum-longliners, could be added to the fleet to tap resources in the exclusive economic zone beyond the 50 m depth zone.

Presently, there are about 200 000 traditional craft in the country, of which about 35 000 are motorised. It is believed that this figure could be increased to 50 000. Motorization will ease the drudgery of traditional fishermen and enable them to go further out, reducing pressure on near-shore waters.

On the issue of resource conservation, a move to impose uniform ban on fishing during monsoon months has been initiated. This ban will help reduce fishing pressure and stimulate rejuvenation of fish stocks. Most of the west coast States and Andhra Pradesh on the east coast have been enforcing ban on fishing during the monsoon period, although during different periods. I would urge all the coastal States to take early decision on the uniformity of the ban after taking into account the best scientific evidence available with us.

The Government of India has set up an Expert Group to prepare a Comprehensive Policy for the Marine Fisheries. The draft policy document is under finalisation and I believe the document has taken into account the requirements of the State towards implementation of the Code. Further, we have also constituted a Working Group of Experts to reassess the 1991 estimates of the potential yield of marine fishery resources, estimate the additional harvestable yield, and make suggestions about conservation of fishery stocks. The report of this Working Group is likely to be made available soon.

As regards popularisation of the Code and making it available in regional languages, the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department with BOBP support has already translated the Code into Tamil. Street plays to popularise the Code have been organised in fishing villages. A video film has been made. More such initiatives are needed to make the Code a living instrument, a Code of action, rather than another document to be preserved in the library and shelved.

We believe these are major steps towards implementation of the Code, but more needs to be done. I urge the delegates present here, who together represent a formidable array of expertise on marine fisheries, to study the issue and come up with ideas and suggestions. Let this National Workshop move fisheries development and management forward on sound lines, in accordance with the principles of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

### ***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

The Ninth Plan for the Fisheries Sector has focused on an integrated approach to sustainable development and aims to optimise production and productivity, augment export of marine products, generate employment, improve socio-economic conditions of the fishermen and fish farmers, conserve aquatic resources and genetic diversity and increase per capita availability and consumption of fish. This focus shows that so far there has been emphasis on development, in other words more and more exploitation of the resources.. However, the management which is often perceived as a response to development has not received the desired attention and most of us have been lagging in this aspect. The Code provides an excellent opportunity to integrate management with development. In this context, it would not be out of place to suggest that we incorporate suitable provisions in the Tenth Plan, preparations for which may begin soon, to earmark separate funds for activities relating to management of fisheries,

Fisheries management deals with multiple user groups, and sustaining a fishery resource requires the active participation of all user groups joining hands, agreeing on fisheries management plans and finally implementing and enforcing them. The concept of people's participation in natural resources management is being voiced and increasingly recognized in international fora. It is highly essential that management agencies, research and industry should be explicitly and directly associated in development of the resources,

The importance of local-level community management was the focus of BOBP in its Third Phase activities and has done good work on community-based fisheries management and participatory approach to fisheries management. I would suggest that the coastal States and Union Territories use the already tried models on community-based fisheries management and participatory approach to fisheries management in implementing the Code. The BOBP in its new role as an Inter-Governmental Organization should also take up major programmes on meeting the requirements of the member-countries towards implementation of the Code.

Largely arising out of global initiatives, there is now also a pronounced trend towards adoption of preventive approaches to management of renewable resources and such approaches are being increasingly used for fisheries. The wide adoption of such approaches will bring in the desired changes in the state of affairs in marine living resources conservation and could also offer opportunities to improve fisheries management and ensure sustainable fisheries development. However, care must be exercised to avoid indiscriminate application and ensure that any change does not lead to social or economic chaos.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that fisheries is vital to our economy as it provides food, creates jobs and generates foreign exchange. With fisheries under threat everywhere, so is economic well-being. We must change our behaviour so that fisheries has a tomorrow, so that future generations aren't deprived of

fish. Collective action is critical for survival. Hence the need for implementation of the Code of Conduct for Fisheries Responsible in true letter and spirit.

The National Workshop is an important step forward in our efforts to sustainably and equitably manage our fisheries resources. The renewable fishery resources, if properly managed, can produce long-term sustainable yields and thus support continuous economic activities and employment.

As we progress, the fullest and most effective implementation of the Code can only be through a viable partnership between the government, industry and the civil society.

I would once again like to thank **BOBP** for inviting me and I wish the Workshop a great success. I sincerely hope that the Workshop deliberations lead to a fruitful outcome, especially with regard to an action plan for implementation of the Code.

With this, I officially inaugurate the National Workshop on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

*Thank you.*

## **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP**

MKRNair\*

Mr Justice Ramanujam, Shn N K Sinha, Secretary to Government of India, Shri Mohan Chunkath, Secretary of Tamil Nadu, Dr Y S Yadava IGO Coordinator, Ladies & Gentlemen.

I feel privileged to be here this morning when the galaxy of scientists, technocrats and policy makers are initiating a debate on the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

The earlier conviction that living resource being replenishable are inexhaustible is no more true. Any human activity can offset the sustainability of the resource if not carried out with a sense of responsibility. Human greed has inflicted serious dents on the nature, many of which are irreparable and irreversible.

In the fisheries sector we have seen decline in catch and disappearance of certain species in our coastal waters. Biological data also shows a drop in sizes of many commercial varieties of fish.

The common belief that the oceans could be a veritable dumping ground seems to have been accepted by the fishermen who make their living from these very oceans. He not only reacts to any action which pollutes his seas, but also contributes to the polluting activity through discards of his own abandoned fishing gear, debris and other non-biodegradable wastes.

In the absence of a concept of management and control, construction of new fishing vessels is rampant, fishing power in existing units is going up and catching efficiency of the gear is on the rise. We can boast of having unacceptable small mesh sizes in our fishing gear and a record for catching juveniles and non-targeted species. The compounded effect of all these is that the fishing operation is becoming uneconomic, and the fisherman who is slowly losing his lifeline is sighing at the barren sea.

As this phenomenon has manifested in many regions, the international community having concern about the future of fisheries have started actively debating on the issue in the hope of finding a lasting solution. The product of such a series of international consultations by FAO since 1992, which originated with Cancun declaration is the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. As the genesis and features of the Code would be elaborated in the presentations that are to follow, I only wish to state that the Code is right here for us to translate into action.

Looking at our preparedness for implementing the Code, we have adequate legal frame work on the EEZ, on the fishing regulations for each of our maritime States and also a Maritime Zones of India Act to regulate Fishing by Foreign Vessels. Legislation for regulating fishing by Indian owned deep sea fishing vessels is under preparation. A Committee appointed for drafting a comprehensive marine fisheries policy for the nation has almost completed its job. The work of the Committee for re-validation of marine fish resources is progressing. A report on the effect of fishing on endangered species of marine turtles has been received by the Government and its recommendations are being looked into. The Committee appointed to assess the



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requirements of fishing vessels of various classes as well as another Committee to assess the patrol boat requirements for implementation have also submitted their reports to **the Government. Action** is also through for introducing a Vessel Monitoring System in our marine waters.

In the international arena we are signatories to the UNCLOS. Currently we are examining the United Nations Agreement on the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UN Fish Stocks Agreement) and the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and management Measures by the Fishing vessels on the High seas (FAO Compliance Agreement). International consultations are also through on illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. We are also examining the issues involved with the implementation of the - International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity: for the Conservation and Management of Sharks and for reducing Incidental Catch of Sea Birds in Longline Fisheries

In the aquaculture front we are baffled with unauthorised introduction of exotic species and illicit cross border irade of brood stock and seed. A National Committee to deal with and regulate introduction of exotic species set up in the Ministry of Agriculture has cleared certain species for introduction on a case to case basis and orders banning culturing certain undesirable ones have also been issued.

Amidst all these happenings dense clouds are marring the hopes of a better tomorrow and the fisherman is sitting oblivious of the implications.

The key factor is ensuring sustainability of the entire fisheries activity, of which the Code of Conduct is all about. I would therefore urge that the deliberations be focussed on drawing up of an action plan to create increased awareness among the stakeholders, especially the fisherfolk.

Lades and Gentlemen, I conclude with this.. I thank the organizers for giving me this opportunity and also thank all of you for your patient hearing.