

## On-going process towards regional collaboration in fisheries and aquaculture in Central Asian and Caucasus countries

A first step towards regional intergovernmental collaboration in capture fisheries and aquaculture in Central Asia and the Caucasus was recently taken by the Government of Tajikistan. Together with FAO, the Ministry of Agriculture of Tajikistan organized the “Regional Intergovernmental Meeting to Initiate the Establishment of a Central Asian Regional Fisheries Organization”. This intergovernmental meeting was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on 10-12 November 2008.

The meeting aimed to bring together responsible authorities for capture fisheries and aquaculture from the wider Central Asian region to discuss major regional fisheries and aquaculture problems and issues, and to discuss a proposal for the establishment of a regional fishery and aquaculture arrangement (network or regional commission), taking into consideration existing programmes, networks and available institutional capacity in fisheries and related sectors

The meeting was attended by delegates of the governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, People’s Republic of China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. The FAO Sub regional Office for Central Asia (FAOSEC) and FAO Headquarters provided technical assistance to the meeting.

Mr Kasymov, Minister for Agriculture of Tajikistan, officially opened the meeting and offered the assistance of his ministry to the establishment process for a regional fisheries and aquaculture organization. Overviews of the status of the sector were presented and lessons learned from other regional networks, commissions and organizations were discussed in detail.

The main conclusions from the meeting were the following:

- A regional fisheries and aquaculture arrangement should be financially sustainable, pragmatic, flexible, non-bureaucratic and simple to manage.
- While preferences for certain regional arrangements (specifically Art. 6 and Art. 14 under the FAO constitution and an intergovernmental organization or IGO) were indicated, the meeting agreed that more time was needed to consider all



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the information. In particular, some delegates requested more time to discuss the various options with competent national authorities.

- The name of the future regional arrangement should reflect its regional scope and objectives; being Central Asia and Caucasus region and both inland capture fisheries and aquaculture development and management.
- Most country delegates preferred a regional arrangement open to all countries concerned, because of the transboundary nature of water bodies and related fish stocks in the region, among other reasons.

The follow-up from this first meeting involves the establishment of a Steering Committee to prepare an outline agreement conceiving a regional collaborative fisheries and aquaculture arrangement. On request of the country delegates, FAO will support the preparation of the agreement and a meeting of the Steering Committee through a TCP-Facility project (TCP/RER/3203) “Support to the establishment of a regional fisheries and aquaculture organization for Central Asia and the Caucasus”. The meeting of the Steering Committee will be held at the FAOSEC in Ankara March 2009. It is likely that a second intergovernmental meeting will be called for in mid-2009.

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